

ENGLISH
RADICALISM
1886-1914

By the same author
ENGLISH RADICALISM
1832-1852
ENGLISH RADICALISM
1853-1886

ENGLISH RADICALISM 1886-1914

BY

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TO THE MEMORY OF MY HISTORY TUTOR
SIR G. G. BUTLER
AND THE YEARS SPENT UNDER HIS GUIDANCE
AT CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE

PREFACE

IN 1938, when the second volume of *English Radicalism* appeared, dealing with the years 1853-86, some friendly critics were kind enough to express a wish to see the story continued to 1905 or even to 1914. In point of fact, the writer had already begun to collect or consult the material that might be necessary for such a task, and a little encouragement from the reviewers was all that was required to make him adopt the task as his own. The war and its aftermath, however, imposed long delays, and there was a pleasanter cause of delay in the award of a Leverhulme Fellowship to permit an exploration of the eighteenth-century origins of "radical reform".

The Leverhulme Fellowship study brought the conviction that much submerged or forgotten material existed which, if brought together under some such titles as *Origins of English Radicalism, 1763-1785*, and *Radical Reform from Paine to Cobbett* might have real light to shed on the course of English political development. Accordingly the ambitious plan of writing the story of Radicalism after 1886 in two volumes, the first to end at 1905, was reluctantly given up, and the present large single volume was chosen to take the Radicals' story to 1914. It was a sacrifice to abandon the hope of taking the account to the point, after 1918, when Radical politicians and voters began increasingly to drop the old name and pass into the ranks of "Labour". But fascinating and revealing as that part of the story could have been, the documentation is still very far from complete. It seemed wiser to turn first to the considerable volume of material collected on Radicalism's origins, and in some danger of dispersion.

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PART ONE

CHAPTER I

THE HOME RULE CONTROVERSY, 1886

"The duration of Parliaments should be shortened, and members of Parliament should receive reasonable payment. Candidates should be relieved of official election expenses. The Parliamentary oath should be abolished. A hereditary chamber is alike indefensible in theory and injurious in practice. The rules of the House of Commons must be fundamentally altered, so as to admit of the rapid passage of urgent reforms. A complete measure of Land Law reform must be passed. Local councils should be invested with compulsory powers of purchase, and with authority to determine questions of fair rents, fixity of tenure, and easy means of transfer. I am in favour of the principle of religious equality. I approve of Free Education. . . . I am in favour of the ratepayers having complete control of the liquor traffic. . . . To England, Scotland, and Ireland, the amplest powers of self-government should be given, compatible with the complete integrity of the Empire. Moreover, every landward parish or other suitable rural area should be empowered to elect a Council after the manner of Town Councils. I am resolutely opposed to all wars of aggression. International disputes should be settled by arbitration. I should protest against any Cabinet declaring war without the previous consent of the House of Commons. I would abolish all perpetual pensions, and many not perpetual, without compensation, and demand a thorough revision of the Civil List. The Employers' Liability Act should be made absolutely compulsory, and its benefits extended to our sailors. I will support any efficient measure to ensure the seaworthiness of merchant ships. . . . The railways, like the postal and telegraph services, should form a Department of the State. I estimate the annual profits to the nation at not less than £10,000,000. Rates and taxes should be levied on true annual land values, and a graduated tax on net incomes over, say £300 per annum, should be imposed."

The "advanced" Election Address of Hugh Watt, shipbroker, elected M.P. for Camlachie (Glasgow) late in 1885, shows how many Radical causes were to be submerged in the flood of Home Rule controversy.

"At the desire of a large number of Radical Members of Parliament, I write to make an appeal to you with regard to your attitude upon the Government of Ireland Bill. They are

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all of them amongst your warmest admirers, and they have always looked to you as the leader of their phase of political thought. They advocated your 'unauthorised programme' at the last General Election, and they have persistently defended you against . . . attacks and aspersions. . . . With much that you have said upon the Irish Bill they agree. . . . The issue of the division on Monday is, we believe, entirely in your hands. Should the Bill be lost there will be a General Election at once, which will disturb the trade and commerce of the country; and it will take place at . . . the worst period of the year for the Radicals, owing to the Registration Laws now in force. . . . A General Election, without you on our side, may lead to a Whig-Tory, or Tory-Whig Government, which would relegate to the dim and distant future all those measures which you and we so ardently desire may become law. Under these circumstances is it too much for us to ask you to make an effort to avert all these contingencies?"

Labouchere to Chamberlain, June 5, 1886 (Thorold's *Labouchere*).

"A 'people's dissolution' has come upon us. Such is the title given by Mr. Gladstone to the most wanton political convulsion which has, in our time, afflicted our country. The caprice of an individual is elevated to the dignity of an act of the people by the boundless egoism of the Prime Minister. The United Kingdom is to be disunited for the purpose of securing in office, if only for a little while, by the aid of a disloyal faction subsisting on foreign gold, a Government deserted by all who could confer upon it character or reputation. . . . How long, gentlemen, will you and your brother-electors tolerate this one-man power? . . . The negotiator of the 'Alabama' arbitration, the hero of the Transvaal surrender, the perpetrator of the bombardment of Alexandria, the decimator of the struggling Sudan tribes, the betrayer of Khartoum, the person guilty of the death of Gordon—stands before the country all alone."

From Lord Randolph Churchill's Election Address, June 19, 1886.

THE elections of November and December 1885 yielded a House of Commons of 333 Liberals, 251 Conservatives and 86 Parnellites,¹ and the greater part of the Liberal majority had committed itself to Radical pledges during the election proceedings. Nevertheless the Tory Government of Lord Salisbury did not resign. There were excellent tactical reasons to induce Ministers to throw upon Parliament the onus of dismissing them.

The most important factor in the Government's favour was the notorious division in the Liberal camp between the "moderate Liberals" and the Radicals. The exact "moderate Liberal" strength that could be rallied round Lord Hartington and Mr. Goschen at a crisis was singularly hard to gauge owing to the unique position of Mr. Gladstone as the chief who had been honoured alike in the election addresses of "moderates" and "advanced" men.² But it would certainly be far from negligible and might, in the event of such things as Irish outrages, become formidable. That Gladstone perceived the danger that the Irish Question might break up his following is shown by his twice offering to support Lord Salisbury, who was known to have made some study of Home Rule possibilities, in carrying an agreed plan of Irish Devolution.³

But Lord Salisbury, with the formidable increase of Irish rent-refusal and boycottry as his justification, had already resolved on a complete abandonment of Tory efforts to come to an agreement with Parnell. It was plain that no Tory Government could hope to meet all Parnell's claims, and that the mere attempt would split the party catastrophically. Both from the long view and the short, it was better for Conservatives to return to their old principle, that Ireland's first requirement was the restoration of "law and order", and to leave to Gladstone, if he desired it, the unenviable task of seeking the co-operation of Parnell.⁴ Indeed, the Queen's Speech on January 1886 was almost written with the intention of forcing Gladstone's hand. It condemned Home Rule and

¹ *Pall Mall Gazette* "Extra", No. 21, p. 9.

² *Illustrated London News*, September 26, 1885.

³ Morley's *Gladstone* (ed. 1908), ii, 374. The intermediary was Mr. Balfour, Lord Salisbury's nephew.

⁴ W. S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, ii, 22, for Salisbury writing: "The fact that Gladstone is mad to take office, will force him into some line of conduct which will be discreditable to him, and disastrous. . . ."

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intimated that a new Coercion Act would be asked for against the Irish National League's Land Plan and the "organised intimidation" and "concerted resistance to the enforcement of legal obligations" to which it had led.¹

Before debating on the Queen's Speech opened, the Tory strategists lost a preliminary means of sowing dissensions among their opponents on which they had put some reliance.² On January 13th the Speaker allowed Bradlaugh to take the Oath and overrode the attempts of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, Leader of the House, to question his course and to open a way for the repetition of the anti-Atheist Tory manoeuvres of 1880-5.³ Moreover, after debating on the Queen's Speech began on January 21st, it became obvious that it was not intended to bring down the Government on an Irish amendment⁴ or, indeed, on any amendment which should aid the Tories in attacking the auspices under which Gladstone would resume office. Thus the "advanced" Professor Hunter, who had gathered a large group for attacking the Tory annexation of Burma, was asked by Gladstone himself not to press his amendment to a Division (January 25th). Later that evening when another Scottish member, Barclay of Forfarshire, moved an amendment committing the House to security of tenure for "cultivators of the soil" he obtained only a Division of 183 against 211.⁵ The fact was that it had already been discreetly intimated to the majority that the best amendment on which to defeat the Government would be that of Jesse Collings which was not reached till January 26th. Though Collings was an advanced and prominent exponent of the "Radical Programme", his amendment regretting the Government's failure to announce a Small Holdings and Allotments Bill for agricultural labourers seemed less likely to cause anxiety to "moderate Liberals" than Barclay's.⁶

¹ W. S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, ii, 31-40, for the circumstances in which the Queen's Speech was drafted.

² Most of the Irish members, for example, had hitherto voted against the bulk of the Liberal party on Bradlaugh issues.

³ *The Times*, January 14th. See W. S. Churchill, *op. cit.*, ii, 6, 9, for Tory attempts to intimidate or change the Speaker before the issue arose.

⁴ J. L. Garvin's *Chamberlain*, ii, 167, for Chamberlain to Parnell on the Tory desire to "force the issue on the Irish question in the hope that an appeal to the country would give them a majority... it would seem desirable in the interests of a fair solution of the Irish question that the defeat should be brought about on some other issue; and Mr. Collings's amendment offers a favourable opportunity."

⁵ *Hansard*, January 25th.

⁶ Tuckwell and Gwynn's *Life of Dilke*, ii, 205, for a meeting of ex-Cabinet Ministers presided over by Gladstone which adopted the amendment "as a way

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Not, however, till Ministers announced, on January 26th, that they intended to produce a new Coercion Bill almost immediately, did it become quite certain that they would be defeated later that evening on Jesse Collings's motion. The Division when it came was decisive, 329 votes being recorded against the Government's 250, thanks to the solid Parnellite weight thrown against the Ministers.¹ But if the Government's defeat was complete enough to enforce instant resignation, there were some ominous indications of trouble in store for the coalised victors. The land views expressed by Collings, Arch and Bradlaugh had been so little to the taste of "moderate Liberals" that Hartington and Goschen had supported the Government. Sixteen other Liberals had followed them, and there were seventy-six more whose names were not recorded in the Division Lists at all. Among the sixteen and the seventy-six, moreover, it was known that many were more alarmed by Gladstone's reported readiness to concede Parnell Home Rule than by the blessing he had bestowed upon the Collings motion. The fact that even among the victorious 329 there were men so "advanced" as Chamberlain who were anxious to impose limits on Gladstone's Irish plans proved, in the end, the most ominous fact of all.²

One of the most notable political biographies of all time, Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, has described with great fullness and intimacy the difficulties which Gladstone had to overcome in constructing a Home Rule Cabinet. Not only did a distinguished and experienced group of "moderate Liberals" refuse to participate in what seemed to them a reckless and unnecessary adventure,³

out of all their difficulties and differences" (January 21st). The amendment seems to have been drafted in the first place by Chamberlain and Harcourt. (Cf. A. G. Gardiner's *Life of Sir William Harcourt*, i, 560.)

¹ *Hansard*, January 26th.

² Garvin's *Chamberlain*, ii, 127-72. Chamberlain's original policy had been to leave the Tories in for a space "to stew in Parnellite juice". This would allow the Tory Government to be thoroughly humiliated whenever the majority had a mind and would also force Parnell to approach the Liberals instead of the Liberals having to approach him. After the reports began that Gladstone was so "mad for office" that he was ready to offer Parnell Home Rule on a dangerous scale, Chamberlain worked hard to force the ex-Premier to terms which should not "break up the party". At one time it seemed not unlikely that "Mr. G." might be faced by an ultimatum on Ireland from Chamberlain, Harcourt and Hartington combined. But helped by Harcourt's reluctance to take extreme steps, the "old man" successfully evaded precise definitions of the Irish legislation he had in mind.

³ From Morley's *Gladstone* it would appear that Hartington, Goschen, Selborne, Derby and Northbrook, all men of Cabinet experience, declined office. It is not surprising therefore to hear that some politicians considered that Gladstone might have to surrender his mandate.

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but "advanced Liberals" too gave trouble. Bright made it plain that he desired no office, Sir Henry James declined the Lord Chancellorship, and Chamberlain and Trevelyan only entered the Cabinet on the understanding that they were completely free to criticise such Irish plans as Gladstone should ultimately produce. A Cabinet of fourteen was finally formed which, thanks to the abstention of the "moderate Liberals", appeared to be the most Radical the century had yet seen. If Chamberlain, Morley, Trevelyan and Mundella were the most professedly "advanced" of its members, Campbell-Bannerman, Lord Ripon and Sir William Harcourt seemed, in many respects, not very far behind.

The "Socialist riots" of February 8th in the West End of London, and the few days of unseemly panic into which they threw some of the "prosperous classes",¹ had no obviously harmful effect on the fortunes of the new Government. Indeed the three Gladstonian Ministers, whose re-election was challenged by the Conservatives, all increased their majorities considerably.² On the whole, it would appear that the average non-political "man in the street" wished the new Ministers well.³ Certainly their resolution to meet the conditions which had produced the West End rioting by a combination of easier Out-Door Relief, prosecution of seditious Socialist speaking and full inquiry into the police breakdown seemed the most "practical" possible. And their consultations on new methods of ending the Irish difficulties, which had distracted British politics for so long, were warmly enough welcomed in the abstract. When, on February 22nd, the impetuous Lord Randolph Churchill began the perilous work of threatening the Government with armed resistance from Ulster, his course was very widely disapproved.⁴ It helped rather than hindered the Government that he should a little later have proceeded to the melodramatic formula of "Ulster will fight and Ulster will be

¹ Cf. *Annual Register*, Chronicle, February 10th: "A feeling of uneasiness heightened by the all-pervading black fog, culminated in an absolute panic in the afternoon when the rumour became current that a mob of 50,000 men was marching from Deptford and Greenwich wrecking and looting on the way. Throughout the night a repetition of false alarms kept up the excitement. . . ."

² *Illustrated London News*, February 20th, for the results at S. Hackney, Newcastle and Grimsby. At Newcastle Morley's majority rose from 629 to as much as 2,721 despite his special exposure to attack as Irish Secretary.

³ This is based largely on the attitude of the non-political *Illustrated London News* during February and March.

⁴ The *Leeds Mercury*, February 25, 1886, reported that the *Belfast Morning News* and the *Northern Whig* both objected to the Orange displays which had taken place. Ulster Liberalism, still strong both in the "moderate" and "advanced"

right." Not, indeed, until March 29th, when it was confirmed that Chamberlain and Trevelyan had left the Cabinet on Irish issues, did "the country" begin to suspect the magnitude of the political storm that was gathering.

Meanwhile the strong Radical element in the Commons had had some relatively care-free weeks during which to push its favourite measures. Two divisions especially were held to show that Radicalism now controlled well-nigh half the House. On March 5th Labouchere (M.P. Northampton) raised 166 votes against 202 for the Abolition of Hereditary Peerages, and on March 9th Dillwyn (M.P. Swansea) was only prevented from committing the Commons to Welsh Disestablishment by a vote of 241-229.¹ Two other significant divisions are worth citing. In an attempt to prevent future Ministries from using a long Parliamentary Recess for forceful military adventures like that against Burma, Henry Richard (M.P. Merthyr Tydfil) moved, on March 19th, to disallow declarations of war, without consent of Parliament, and obtained a vote of 107 against 115.² On March 23rd Professor Thorold Rogers did better. By 216 votes against 176 he carried the resolution:

That the present system under which in England and Wales the first incidence of local taxation (with some slight exceptions) falls on the occupier and not on the owner of lands and tenements is unjust; that such owners ought in equity to bear at least a moiety of those charges; that the system under which country mansions are rated is unfair; and that the owners of ground rents in towns are liable to no part of those charges, the outlay of which is essential in order that the property may possess any marketable value whatever.

This was almost to commit the House to the "Radical Programme".

But this kind of hopeful Radical activity was doomed to speedy extinction in the tempest of political controversy which was excited

forms, was almost united in agreeing that it was inexcusable in an ex-Cabinet Minister to use such incitement to rebellion as

"The combat deepens: on, ye brave,
Who rush to glory or the grave.
Wave, Ulster—all thy banners wave,
And charge with all thy chivalry."

¹ *Hansard*, March 5th and 9th.

² *Illustrated London News*, March 27th, was so impressed by Richard's success—he had actually carried his first motion "that the Speaker do leave the Chair" by 112-108—that it prophesied that the Executive's power of declaring war independently of Parliament would not last long.

after the Prime Minister introduced his Government of Ireland Bill on April 8th and his Irish Land Bill on April 16th. Wonderful as was the power which Gladstone displayed in drafting them first and urging them afterwards, it soon grew obvious that his eagerness to dispose of the Irish Question in one great legislative effort had led him well beyond the limits of everyday prudence. The Prime Minister hoped, above all, for an Irish change of heart. After England should have forsworn Coercion and handed over the civil control of Ireland, with some necessary safeguards, to the Irish people; after England should have provided a credit of fifty millions as a basis for the gigantic Tenant-Purchase operations necessary to buy out Irish landlord rights, Gladstone felt sure that all the guiding influences of native Ireland, priestly and lay, would have every motive for making the new arrangements a success. But it was easy to see that, unless the Irish change of heart on which the Prime Minister was relying did really come about, the difficulties, after Home Rule, might be infinitely greater than those before. If Imperial authority constantly had to override the Dublin Parliament and Executive in order to prevent the violation of Irish Protestant rights; if it had repeatedly to use measures of force to safeguard Imperial Defence or to collect the repayment-instalments due to the British Treasury from recalcitrant Tenant-Purchasers, the last state of Anglo-Irish relations would apparently be worse than the first. Bright, for example, was one of the "advanced men" who was so convinced of Parnellite bad-faith that he preferred a continuance of Coercion Bills to the risks of putting the "rebel party" in charge at Dublin.¹

It is unnecessary to describe here the involved net of negotiation, intrigue and manœuvre in which politics were enmeshed between April 8th, when the Government of Ireland Bill was first introduced, and June 7th when it was rejected. Suffice it to say that in addition to the whole Tory party and a considerable Liberal band, gathered round Lord Hartington, a third Opposition of "advanced men" had formed round Chamberlain. This third Opposition demanded like the others the withdrawal of the Irish Land Bill but would have been prepared to consider a much

¹ G. M. Trevelyan, *John Bright*, 446-58, for some invaluable material. He told Gladstone on March 20th: "I thought he placed far too much confidence in the leaders of the rebel party. I could place none in them, and the general feeling was and is that any terms made with them would not be kept, and that through them I could not hope for reconciliation with discontented and disloyal Ireland."

modified Irish Government Bill.¹ Gladstone, aware of his danger, surrendered the Land Bill but declined to go farther on the Irish Government Bill than to promise large alterations in Committee after the Second Reading. This was unsatisfactory to Chamberlain because it would have left Gladstone too much the arbiter of the alterations. On May 31st, with the moral support of a letter from Bright, Chamberlain's "advanced" group made its fateful decision. The Government of Ireland Bill would be opposed though this would apparently entail the downfall of the Gladstone Administration.

Meanwhile, encouraged by striking party and popular manifestations in his favour, the "Grand Old Man" resolved on taking a "people's line" both in Parliament and, if need were, at a General Election. Winding up the Government of Ireland Bill debates on June 7th he made a speech of great power.²

"We do not", he said, "undervalue or despise the forces opposed to us. I have described them as the forces of class and its dependents, and that, as a general description, is, I believe, perfectly true. . . . You have power, you have wealth, you have rank, you have station, you have organisation. What have we? We think that we have the people's heart (Home Rule cheers). We believe and we know we have the promise of the harvest of the future. As to the people's heart, you may dispute it and dispute it with perfect sincerity, let that matter make its own proof. As to the harvest of the future, I doubt if you have so much confidence, and I believe that there is in the breast of many a man who means to vote against us to-night a profound misgiving approaching even to a deep conviction that the end will be as we foresee and not as you do—that the ebbing tide is with you and the flowing tide is with us." (Ministerial cheers.)

¹ Garvin's *Chamberlain*, ii, 222, for Chamberlain's conditions:

- "1. A separate Assembly for Ulster.
2. The complete subordination of the Irish Assemblies to the Imperial Parliament.
3. Irish Assemblies to deal only with subjects expressly referred to them instead of with all subjects not expressly withdrawn from their competence.
4. Instead of Ireland paying to England for certain Imperial purposes the Imperial Parliament will collect all taxation as now, and pay over to Ireland its share of Education, Local Government, etc., etc."

Above all these Chamberlain put the retention of Irish members at Westminster as making plain to all the world the continued retention of the Imperial Parliament's jurisdiction over Ireland save for the subjects referred to the subordinate Irish Assemblies.

² The raillery of Chamberlain in this speech is accepted as the best piece of irony Gladstone ever undertook. Yet he was seventy-seven, was speaking late at night and had undergone over four months of desperate and continuous strain.

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And after he had been defeated in a division of 313-343 and had decided on a Dissolution, he opened the oratory of the General Election thus:¹

. . . the present dissolution is the people's dissolution (Hear, hear and cheers) and the present election is the people's election . . . never did I know interest so profound, never did I know enthusiasm so abundantly poured forth as it has been since the great question of our relations with Ireland has come forward to be determined, and the signs of yesterday when, departing from the great metropolis of the south, I reached the metropolis of the north would have been enough to convince the most incredulous. . . .

In point of fact it was necessary to construct an unexampled election *entente* between Tories, "moderate Liberals" and Chamberlain's newly erected National Radical Union in order to bring about Gladstone's defeat.² And, if in the event, the new House of Commons showed a majority of 110 against the Irish Government Bill, that result was not achieved by any remarkable preponderance of voters. In a summary of the situation, published by Gladstone a few weeks after he had made way for Salisbury at No. 10 Downing Street, he analysed the polls of Great Britain (exclusive of Ireland)³ as follows:

For Liberals	1,344,000
For Dissident Liberals	379,000
For Tories	1,041,000
For Tories and Dissidents	1,420,000

A mere majority of 76,000 in Great Britain was therefore the ultimate reason why Ireland's wishes, as represented by over 80 Parnellites, were to be disregarded and why the official Liberals in the new House of Commons numbered merely 196 as against 316 Tories and 74 Dissident Liberals. There was, according to Gladstone, no reason to lose heart in all this. The rapid way in which vast British masses had been won for Home Rule should prove to Ireland the advantage of persisting with the constitutional

¹ From the pamphlet *Mr. Gladstone in Scotland. Verbatim Report of Speech—delivered in Edinburgh on Friday evening, June 18th 1886.*

² Cf. Garvin's *Chamberlain*, ii, 254, for "Gladstone's tour of the country was of all his progresses and crusades the most picturesque and moving. It fascinated multitudes of the simple; moved them almost to worship. . . ."

³ Gladstone, *The Irish Question*, p. 27. The same treatment of Irish figures was impossible because 64 Parnellite seats had been left uncontested. If the Unionists had contested them the total figures of the nation's polling would possibly have shown a majority against the victorious Coalition.

and "moral force" methods of pursuing her claims.¹ And in Great Britain, as Gladstone pointed out with meaning, the reunion of the sundered Liberals with the main body would bring about the end of Tory power.² Salisbury was, in fact, so conscious of this that, before consenting to form a Tory Cabinet, he offered to stand aside in order to allow Hartington to attempt the construction of a Coalition Cabinet with resistance to Home Rule as its basis.³ Sincere as the offer to Hartington certainly was, Salisbury probably foresaw both Hartington's inability to avail himself of it and yet the special claim on Liberal Unionist⁴ consideration he should have established by making it.

But though the Dissident Liberals were finally committed to supporting the Salisbury Government "until the Liberal party can be reorganised on principles which they can approve", Salisbury's problems were still far from over. For economic as well as political reasons, bad Irish troubles were expected.⁵ Dependent as the Tory Government would be on the support of the anti-Home Rule Liberals and Radicals, an immediate resort to Coercion Acts was out of the question.⁶ The Government determined to announce, instead, a policy less objectionable to its Liberal allies and less open to Parnellite and Gladstonian assault. If law and order were to be unflinchingly maintained, even to the extent of calling in Major-General Sir Redvers Buller to superintend its enforcement, firmness was not to be the Government's only word. A Royal Commission was to prepare the way for a large Tenant-Purchase measure, and Exchequer grants were promised to help the creation of a deep-sea fishing industry, to secure the extension of the Irish railway, light railway and tramway systems, and to promote great arterial drainage works for the Shannon, Bann and Barrow. Finally, local self-government for Irish counties and county sub-divisions would not be omitted from the general Local

¹ Gladstone, *The Irish Question*, pp. 54-6.

² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³ B. Holland, *Life of Devonshire* (Hartington), ii, 166-74.

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 173, for Hartington's assurance to the Queen that he would help to maintain Salisbury in power. The Dissident Liberals of Gladstone's terminology were now widely assuming the style of Liberal Unionists, Liberals, that is, determined to maintain the union of Great Britain and Ireland.

⁵ The prices of agricultural produce were still falling fast, so that even the "judicial rents", fixed under the 1881 Land Act, were becoming harder for tenants to meet.

⁶ Salisbury had been warned that such a course would promote the reunion of a large number of Dissidents with the Gladstonians.

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Government organisation which the Ministry was planning for 1887.¹

This programme certainly enabled the new Ministers to go through a short Session in August and September 1886 without any overwhelming Parliamentary anxieties. An Irish Tenants' Relief Bill, urged by Parnell and supported by Gladstone as necessary to stay the growth of agrarian disorder in Ireland, was, for example, rejected on Second Reading by 297 votes against 202 despite a certain hesitation among Radical Unionists.² Yet it would appear that the coming into office of a Conservative Government had already encouraged certain landowners and agents to threaten eviction more freely and to show less readiness to offer what were considered suitable abatements of rent to hard-hit tenants and harder-hit leaseholders. And though Ministers had strong grounds of objection to the details of Parnell's Bill, the fact that General Buller himself found it advisable to refuse police-help in some contemplated cases of eviction seems to show that Parnell had a case with which the Government had avoided coming to grips.³ Inevitably a new agrarian struggle began during the autumn which became popularly known as the "Plan of Campaign". On numbers of estates the entire tenantry assembled, and, after consultation, a "reasonable" offer was made to the landlord of a reduced rate of rent to correspond with the alleged fall in the price of agricultural produce. If this was rejected, every tenant was bound to refuse the rent to his landlord. Instead, he was to offer the reduced rent, or a proportion of it, to trustees who would hold it until the landlord capitulated but would meanwhile make deductions, ultimately chargeable upon the landlord, for the legal expenses of resisting eviction proceedings and sustaining the "victims" of eviction orders.

It was not the least amongst the Government's anxieties that the rank-and-file of the Gladstonian Opposition, now grown much

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, August 19th, Lord Randolph Churchill. Churchill had been made Leader of the Commons.

² *Ibid.*, September 20th and 21st for the debate. *The Graphic*, September 25th, commented pointedly on the fact that Hartington was only followed by about thirty "Liberal Unionists" in supporting the Government, the rest abstaining. Even Hartington "was impressive in his appeal to the landlords to be generous to the tenants".

³ Cf. *The Graphic*, November 6th: "A circular with respect to evictions has, it is said, been issued from the office of Sir Redvers Buller, in which among other directions is one requiring the local sergeant of police to report on all the circumstances in the case of a contemplated eviction, and on the facts ascertained depends whether or not police will be supplied. . . ."

more Radical¹ as a result of the secession of practically the entire strength of "moderate Liberalism", showed no marked repugnance for the "illegalities" of the "Plan of Campaign". Though "fire-brand" Parnellite lieutenants like Dillon and O'Brien were whipping up Irish tenancies to ever extremer "confiscations" of their landlords' rents, Gladstone and the National Liberal Federation went on committing themselves ever more fundamentally to Home Rule.² Nor was this all. In Scotland and Wales, both represented by Gladstonian majorities, startling movements of spontaneous social revolt had broken out in the heart of the countryside. And if the Welsh farmers' "strike" against tithe-payments had been temporarily ended by offering them considerable reductions,³ and if the Scottish crofters' struggle against their landlords never assumed the extreme forms some would have liked to see,⁴ there undoubtedly seemed for a time a prospect that "land wars" would become almost as endemic in Wales and the Highlands of Scotland as they had become in Ireland. With the approach of distressful winter conditions, too, the Socialists were stirring up dangerous trouble for the Government in London⁵ while the Metropolitan Radical Federation led a movement of its own

¹ Most significantly shown in the collection of opinions styled *The New Liberal Programme*, edited by Andrew Reid in October 1886. Virtually all the prominent Liberal Parliamentarians, who contributed, advocated Radical programmes as the quickest way of recapturing power.

² Cf. the angry *Graphic*, November 27th: "Mr. Gladstone's expression of confidence in 'the moderation of the demands and conduct of Ireland' is curiously illustrated by the language and procedure of some of Mr. Parnell's lieutenants. . . . Mr. W. O'Brien, M.P., of *United Ireland*, Mr. Dillon, M.P., and others are too successfully instigating tenants on large estates to adopt the new anti-rent programme of the National League, and even, as in the case of Lord Clanricarde, to refuse payment of any rent until persons evicted for hopeless insolvency are reinstated in their holdings."

³ *The Liberator*, October, November and December 1886, for full accounts of the "Tithe War".

⁴ *The Graphic*, September 25th, reported the arrival of two of Gladstone's ex-Ministers in Skye, the headquarters of the struggle, to investigate its causes on the spot. By October 9th it was reporting: "Immense excitement reigns amongst the Skye crofters owing to the arrival of H.M.S. *Humber* and a force of Marines to protect the sheriff's officers and the police in serving writs for the recovery of the arrears of rent, and Poor and School rates. Immediately the news of the arrival of the Marines was known, horns were blown throughout Kilmuir, and although it was past midnight the crofters met from all parts to decide upon the course they should take. . . ." To follow how the struggle spread to the mainland and how, after the first prison sentences for "rioting" were awarded at Inverary in the last week of 1886, the Radicals of Edinburgh and Glasgow were stirred to undertake the supporting movement, which helped the crofters materially, will be found a study of special interest.

⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, October 23rd, for the early uneasiness excited by the first big Socialist project of the winter, the march of unemployed behind the Lord Mayor's Procession of November 9th: "We can quite understand and believe that the

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against the continued demand on working-class parents for "school pence".¹

But Salisbury's most pressing immediate anxiety was destined to come from the dashing politician whom he had appointed to the Leadership of the Commons. Lord Randolph Churchill, in the view of some of the stiffer Conservatives, had already shown too great a desire to outbid the Radicals when making his first major pronouncement at Dartford on October 2nd.² But his attempt, in the midst of a European crisis, to enforce what seemed impossible economies on the Army and Navy, and for no other purpose than permitting him to frame a "democratic" Budget, was regarded as wholly inexcusable.³ Rather than give way Lord Salisbury allowed him to resign (December 22nd) and summoned Lord Hartington either to take over as Prime Minister or consent to a formal Coalition in which office would be guaranteed generously to "moderate Liberals". Indeed, Salisbury was ready to go farther in his anxiety to strengthen the barriers against Gladstone's return, barriers which were felt to have been dangerously weakened by the "Cabinet crisis". He was prepared to use all his influence, if need were, to procure Conservative assent for the offer of place to anti-Home Rule Liberals much less satisfactorily "moderate" than Hartington.⁴

Socialist leaders have no desire to break the peace, but can they answer for all those who follow their banner on such an occasion? The destruction effected last February is still vividly remembered by West End tradesmen and others—it would be lamentable if a day set apart for innocent sightseeing should end in riot and possible bloodshed. . . ."

¹ Cf. *The Graphic*, October 9th: "The Free Educationists attended in large numbers at a demonstration in Trafalgar Square to protest against the order of the London School Board (now in the hands of a Conservative majority) that children should not be admitted without payment of the school fees. The gathering was organised by the Metropolitan Radical Federation, and three meetings were held simultaneously. The Socialists addressed the assemblage afterwards. . . . Monday was the first day of the trial of the new scheme for the collection, which in many cases took up the whole time of some of the teachers."

² On "Free Education" and Local Government, for instance, he went farther than was to the taste of most older Conservative politicians.

³ Cf. Lord Salisbury to Churchill, December 22, 1886 (Churchill's *Life*, ii, 237): "You tell me that 31 millions for the two Services is very greatly in excess of what you can consent to; that you are pledged up to the eyes to large reductions of expenditure; and that as you feel certain of receiving no support from me or from the Cabinet, you must resign. . . . The outlook on the Continent is very black. It is not too much to say that the chances are in favour of war at an early date; and when war has once broken out we cannot be secure from the danger of being involved in it. The undefended state of many of our ports and coaling stations is notorious. To refuse to take measures for their protection would be to incur the gravest possible responsibility."

⁴ Cf. B. Holland's *Devonshire*, ii, 168-84, however, for proof that Salisbury would have had considerable trouble with his party.

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The "Cabinet crisis" of December 1886 was not terminated without great trouble. Lord Hartington not only declined the dangerous task of attempting to lead a Coalition overwhelmingly Conservative but evaded enlistment in the Cabinet on the plea that if the Dissident "moderate Liberals" entered the Government, the Radical remainder of the Dissidents would inevitably drift back into the Gladstonian camp. Two other "moderate Liberals" of reputation, Lords Northbrook and Lansdowne, also declined overtures from the shaken Cabinet, and when Lord Hartington was induced to use his influence with a third, conditions were demanded which must have given Salisbury some trouble with his own followers.¹ Reporting to Salisbury the terms on which Goschen would consent to go to the Exchequer, Hartington wrote:²

He would desire to be at liberty to state that in joining your Government, with or without one or two Liberal colleagues in the House of Lords, he had taken this step, not as having become a Conservative or ceasing to hold any of his Liberal opinions, but as a Unionist joining a Government which relies on the support of Unionists of all shades of political opinion. If you think that such an interpretation of his action given by him would be resented by your party he would prefer to remain outside.

Next, he would wish to have a full consultation with you as to general policy, foreign, domestic, legislative, and financial, and satisfy himself that he would be able to act with you on all these questions, as he feels that any subsequent disagreement on them leading to a possible separation, would materially aggravate the present difficulties. . . .

Some Conservatives must certainly have considered this a high line to take by one who had lost his seat at the General Election and had no great chance of finding another without Conservative support. And, in point of fact, even with such support and the prestige of holding the Exchequer, Goschen failed to win a vacant Liberal seat and had to be brought into Parliament for the Tory stronghold of St. George's, Hanover Square.³

¹ Cf. B. Holland's *Devonshire*, ii, 181, for "moderate Liberal" awareness of Conservative dislike for making over-large concessions: "He feels", wrote Hartington of Goschen's original reluctance, "that he will find himself isolated in a Conservative Cabinet, and also that there is no such strong desire on the part of the Conservative party generally for his assistance as would make it worth while for him to separate himself from me and his other Liberal Unionist friends."

² *Ibid.*, p. 182.

³ *The Times* file for January and February 1887 will be found full of such matters.

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Yet Salisbury undoubtedly showed wisdom in his tender handling of the "moderate Liberals". Irish events were making it ever more certain that, for a Tory Government at least, there was no other solution than a severe Coercion Act, and the Dissident Radicals had, for this and other reasons, already opened negotiations for reunion with the Gladstonians.¹ If such a reunion were successfully arranged, every single "moderate Liberal" vote would be needed to keep a bare majority for the Salisbury Government. Even so, occasional defeat was inevitable, and with it, sooner or later, a General Election. At such an Election the "great Conservative sacrifices", made or offered, for the purpose of keeping the co-operation of the "wisest and most statesmanlike of the Liberal leaders" seemed likely to make a very favourable impression on important groups of voters.

¹ Cf. Garvin's *Chamberlain*, ii, 277-96, for an important version of the whole history of the "Round Table Conferences" from the first suggestion thrown out by Chamberlain on December 23, 1886.

CHAPTER II

“IRISH COERCION” IN 1887

“The chief reason why we who constituted the last Government have not said much, if anything, about Home Rule is that those of us . . . who are in the House of Commons have been quite sufficiently occupied with other matters. We have been doomed for five days in each week to the discussion of a most anxious, many-sided political question. . . . Home Rule has been blocked out by Coercion. At one time it appeared as if Coercion itself was going to be blocked out by the obtrusion of another most painful and scandalous controversy—that controversy which was raised by the publication of a letter in *The Times* newspaper, intended to ruin and crush a man whom at all events five or six millions of her Majesty’s subjects look upon as entitled to their perfect confidence, and a man who, I must say, was assailed with weapons that have never been used to my knowledge against an Englishman or a Scotchman. . . . Inquiry in the only form known to our institutions, namely inquiry before a Parliamentary Committee, has been refused. . . .

From Gladstone’s Speech to Welsh Liberals at Singleton Abbey, Glamorgan, June 4, 1887.

REMEMBER TRAFALGAR SQUARE! TORY TERRORISM IN 1887.

“Under the present Government the metropolitan police and magistrates seem too often to be in a conspiracy against the liberties of the public. To meet this conspiracy a combination is necessary to secure the impartial administration of the law, and to defend the public liberties menaced by police proclamations. If a Law and Liberty League were established it could undertake

To defend all persons accused of offences committed in vindication of the right of public meeting. . . .

To prosecute all cases where the police have been guilty of outrages on individuals. . . .

The meeting which was to have been held in Trafalgar Square on the afternoon of Sunday, November 13th, but which was brutally suppressed by the Tories, was one called to protest against the imprisonment of Mr. W. O’Brien, M.P. That the Tory Government, having suppressed political meetings in Ireland, would like, if they could, to suppress them also in England was long ago expected. . . .”

Pall Mall Gazette “Extra”, No. 37. Tues., November 15, 1887.

ON January 13 and 14, 1887 there took place a famous "Round Table Conference" of Liberal leaders to explore the possibilities of healing the breach in the party. The Gladstonians were represented by Harcourt, Morley and Herschell, while Chamberlain and Trevelyan represented the Radical Unionists if not the more "moderate" variety. It was impossible for the Conference not to come quickly upon the hard kernel of difficulties which had split the party in 1886. Chamberlain, in fact, made it abundantly clear that Gladstone's Home Rule proposals would have to be curtailed in at least three important directions to prove acceptable. He demanded a plebiscite for the Ulster counties and the possibility of voting themselves out of Dublin control and into a Northern Ireland system; he insisted that the Irish Judiciary must continue to be nominated and paid by the Imperial Government; and he pressed for the retention of an Imperial Police (over and above the local police forces under Irish control) for safeguarding the many Imperial rights still retained in Ireland.¹ Chamberlain's fellow-negotiators recognised that concession on these and other matters were almost inevitable and the Conference adjourned until February 14th.

Before that day arrived, the prospects of success were reduced by the returning confidence of rank-and-file Gladstonians, cheered by an important by-election victory² and by the successful creation of yet another useful machine for agitation, the Liberal and Radical Union for London. In such circumstances there was much less inclination to tolerate any "dictation" from Chamberlain which should ruin the good understanding established between Gladstone and Parnell, and even Morley considered that Chamberlain was rating his value much too high in holding that he could impose detailed terms upon a great Parliamentary party. Events in Ireland, moreover, seemed to be moving steadily in favour of the Opposition, for, on the very day fixed for the resumption of the Liberal "Round Table Conference", the Crown was bringing Dillon, O'Brien, and other advocates of the "Plan of Campaign" before a Dublin jury, on charges of "conspiracy". In view of some "barbarous" evictions lately "perpetrated" in Ireland,³ it seemed

¹ Garvin's *Chamberlain*, ii, 286 et sqq.

² On January 26th, Goschen, Salisbury's new Chancellor of the Exchequer, had been defeated by a Gladstonian in a Liverpool by-election.

³ Cf. *Illustrated London News*, January 22nd and 29th, for illustrations of the

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almost certain that the Government would fail to secure a conviction.¹ And if this were so, Ministers would be forced to ask Parliament almost immediately for a Coercion Act which might well prove their undoing.

On February 14th, therefore, Chamberlain found Morley, who as ex-Irish Secretary had the Gladstonian lead on Irish details, stiffer and less yielding than he had hoped. Sensing the cause, he resolved to give the Gladstonians a lesson which should teach them that he was not to be under-rated with impunity. On February 25th appeared his remarkable letter in the *Baptist* newspaper, soon broadcast over the land. In it he virtually appealed to the normal Radical voter against Gladstone and Gladstone's Home Rule Bill, as responsible for delaying, perhaps, for decades, reforms otherwise immediately attainable in whole or in part.²

“Whether the process occupies a generation or a century,” wrote Chamberlain of Welsh Disestablishment, “‘poor little Wales’ must wait until Mr. Parnell is satisfied and Mr. Gladstone's policy adopted. They will not wait alone. The crofters of Scotland and the agricultural labourers of England will keep them company. Thirty-two millions of people must go without much-needed legislation because three millions are disloyal. . . . So long as the majority of the Liberal party is committed to proposals which a large section of Liberals and Radicals firmly believe to be dangerous . . . so long the party will remain shattered and impotent and reform will be indefinitely postponed.”

Whether he intended it or not, Chamberlain's letter ended the “Round Table Conferences”. Though Trevelyan, his brother-negotiator, was before long to accept Gladstonian assurances and head a slow drift-back of “advanced” Dissentients into the Gladstonian camp, the first results of an episode, so strongly stressing scenes going on. The evictions at Glenbeigh, Co. Kerry, acquired an unenviable notoriety even in Ireland. It was not that rent had not been in arrears for years—there were cases of rent unpaid for five, six and seven years. The facts giving the situation its special horror were the ordering of the evictions by the money-lenders into whose hands the estate had fallen, the miserable poverty of the evicted even when they had successfully evaded rent-payment for years, and the extreme measures taken by the evicters in burning or dismantling the miserable cottiers' huts in order to prevent re-occupation by force as soon as the strong constabulary party had left.

¹ *British Almanac*, 1888, p. 276, for the expected disagreement of the jury on February 24th.

² It should, perhaps, be explained how the *Baptist* letter came to be written. Gladstone in a public letter had put the responsibility for the blackening of the prospects of Welsh Disestablishment on the Dissentients. Invited by the *Baptist* newspaper for his views, Chamberlain took the opportunity strongly to rebut a charge which he considered the more unfair in that Gladstone himself was but a very recent and uncertain convert.

the continuance of divisions among the Liberals, was undoubtedly to help the Salisbury Government. Thus on March 18th, after long debate dating back to February 21st, the Government carried through the Commons a drastic new Closure Rule, allowing any member at any time to move the Closure and secure it if supported by a bare majority, provided only the majority was made up of over 200 members.¹ The Irish members had prophesied in advance that this new Closure procedure was devised in order to muzzle them during the discussions on the severe Coercion Bill whose coming they predicted, and for which, indeed, *The Times* was seeking to prepare the way with a series of articles on *Parnellism and Crime* soon to become notorious.² The Irish members were right. On Monday, March 21st, it was announced that an Irish Crimes Bill would be speedily introduced and that the Government would claim precedence for it before other business as urgent. Morley, for the Gladstonians, immediately countered by giving notice that he would move the following amendment to any Government "urgency" motion:³

That this House declines to set aside the business of the nation in favour of a measure for increasing the stringency of the criminal law in Ireland, while no effectual security has been taken against the abuse of the law by the exaction of excessive rents.

Though this amendment, debated for the next four nights, was defeated by 349 votes against 260, it could hardly be denied that the fighting spirit of the Opposition increased as Coercion drew ominously nearer.⁴ Here is a report on Mr. Gladstone's intervention in the debate from a journalist whose paper's policy was neutrality:⁵

... Mr. Gladstone on the 24th—made one of his most eloquent and vigorous speeches, speaking in a ringing voice and with sustained energy

¹ Perhaps it should be added that as a check on Closure motions themselves becoming a means of obstruction, the Chair could refuse them to accept them.

² The first series of articles, reprinted in pamphlet form as *Parnellism and Crime* (64 pp. Price 1d.), began with "leaders" of March 7th, March 10th and March 14th. The second series will be mentioned later.

³ *Hansard*, March 21st.

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, March 22nd, 23rd, 24th and 25th. A future Prime Minister who distinguished himself by a "remarkably able, clear and earnest" address in favour of Morley's amendment was H. H. Asquith (E. Fife). The Tory First Lord of the Admiralty considered that only Bright's voting for the Government on March 25th saved it from a possibly fatal number of Liberal Unionist defections. Cf. Trevelyan's *Bright*, p. 459.

⁵ *Illustrated London News*, April 2nd.

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till towards the close, when his tones became hoarse and subdued yet none the less impressive. The leader of the Opposition based his objections on the continued deprivation of the right of bringing forward private business, and on the score that the statistics of crime were not at all so large (nor are they by a long way) as they were in the last year he himself felt called upon to introduce a "Coercion Bill". . . the right hon. gentleman claimed for Mr. Morley's amendment that it did but embody the argument of the Government's "own witness", Sir Redvers Buller, and the course of policy recommended by the Ministry's own Royal Commission. "Step by step", Mr. Gladstone finally said, the Opposition would contend against this "fresh blow struck in the name of a Parliamentary statute, alike against the happiness, the prosperity, the contentment, and the well-being of Ireland and the Union of the Empire."

Here may be added comments from the same observer on the introduction of the Crimes Bill by the new Irish Secretary, Mr. Balfour, on March 28th:¹

Mr. Balfour's Bill for the prevention of "Moonlighting" and intimidation in Ireland . . . is unmistakably stringent. The measure, in brief, proposes "to abolish the jury system altogether for certain classes of crimes", and to arm two magistrates with "a maximum power of inflicting six months' imprisonment with hard labour for the following offences: Criminal conspiracy, boycotting, rioting, offences under the Whiteboy Acts, assaulting officers of the law, taking forcible and unlawful possession and inciting to the above offences"; it provides that at the discretion of the Irish Attorney-General trials by jury of Irish cases may take place in England—whereupon Mr. Healy grimly called out "Aldershot"; it authorises the Lord Lieutenant to "proclaim" certain districts in which the Land League rules; it empowers the Viceroy under pressing circumstances to apply to Parliament to suppress the Land League altogether; and the firm young Secretary for Ireland stated that the Bill would be a permanent one. Mr. John Dillon, in reply, plumply said with a determination which admitted no doubt as to his sincerity that, "if the people of England should be capable of passing such a law I should give up all hope of ever seeing the two peoples shake hands and be friends", and he would either emigrate or lead the Irish people "on to battle". But Mr. Gladstone's sweeping and emphatic condemnation of the Bill . . . put the Parnellite band in a better temper. . . .

When the First Reading Debate on this unprecedentedly severe Bill was ended, on April 1st, by the application of the Closure,

¹ *Illustrated London News*, April 2nd. Officially designated as the Criminal Law and Procedure (Ireland) Bill it was often referred to by the name of the Crimes Bill.

the Opposition was at once indignant and hopeful.¹ It seemed impossible that the bulk of the Radical Unionists should consent to follow the Tories through every situation which would result from the Second Reading, Committee and Report stages of this Bill to give a minority Tory Executive unparalleled, unending and, it was claimed, unwarrantable powers. The Second Reading stage, indeed, was begun on April 5th and 6th, but then came an Easter Recess allowing a special effort to arouse popular indignation. Even London had rarely seen anything like the dense masses called out to Hyde Park on "Bank Holiday Monday", April 11th, by the combined Socialist, Radical and Irish demonstrations against the Coercion Bill. The day was an exceptionally fine one, and the journalists, whether favourable or unfavourable, had perforce to report that "huge processions from each populous quarter of London marched upon the ground, and addresses were delivered to the vast assembly from sixteen platforms, a resolution condemning the Ministerial measure being passed simultaneously. It is roughly estimated that over 100,000 persons were present. Among the members of Parliament who took part . . . were Mr. Cremer, Mr. Seale-Hayne, Mr. Labouchere, Mr. Broadhurst, Mr. T. D. Sullivan, Mr. Conybeare, Mr. W. Redmond, Mr. Stuart, Mr. Pickersgill, Mr. G. Howell, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, Mr. James Rowlands, and Mr. Cobb."²

Encouraged by the success of their great demonstration, the Opposition returned to Parliament, on April 12th, with renewed hopes of defeating Coercion. But counter-efforts were being prepared, calculated completely to undo the demonstration's effects. Thus, the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union, in order to meet the Gladstonian argument that the statistics of agrarian crime were not such as to justify a drastic Coercion Act or, indeed, any Coercion Act at all, crammed every sensational newspaper report that had appeared during the past half-year into its pamphlet, *Ireland under the Ordinary Law, A Record of the Agrarian Crimes and Offences reported in the Dublin Daily Press for the Six months running from the 1st October 1886 to the 31st March 1887*.³

¹ *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1888, p. 350, for the Gladstonians and Parnellites leaving the House after the Closure had been imposed on them. The First Reading was thus carried *nem. con.*

² *Illustrated London News*, April 16th. It should be mentioned that the demonstrators themselves calculated the total numbers engaged at 250,000. (Thorold's *Labouchere*, p. 330.)

³ A careful examination of the pamphlet seems to show that even trivialities

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The Times, meanwhile, had opened a second series of articles on *Parnellism and Crime*¹ and, on April 18th, when the Second Reading Division on the Coercion Bill was due to take place, produced its greatest sensation yet—nothing less than Parnell’s alleged signature to a message which seemed to prove that, in 1882, the Irish leader had expressed in secret very different views on the “Phoenix Park murders” from those with which he had been gulling Gladstone and the Radicals ever since. Though the authenticity of the message printed by *The Times* as Parnell’s was disputed at once, though it was eventually to cost *The Times* and the Conservative party very dear, there can be no doubt, but that, on April 18th, it helped to defeat the Opposition’s attack on Coercion by the very satisfactory majority of 101.² Most “practical” people assumed too readily that *The Times* had put its information to the severest tests before printing it and, like Lord Hartington, they invited Parnell to go to the Law Courts with an action against *The Times* if he wanted his indignant denials to be taken seriously.

An address given next day by Mr. Gladstone to the Eighty Club shows, at once, his indignation at the methods that had been used to produce the Conservative majority, his perception that there might be a fatal flaw in *The Times*’s information, and his hopes that a number of “Dissentients” might still be won over to resist permanent Coercion:³

“Is it fair”, exclaimed Gladstone, “to go about the world and to launch outrageous charges of this kind, and then to tell the man who is the object of them, ‘You have got your remedy by giving me conclusive demonstration of the untruth’.” (Laughter and cheers.) With whom does the burden of proof lie? (Loud cheers.) There is the heart of the whole question. The burden of proof lies on those who make the charge (Loud cheers) and unless they make the charge with evidence that will bear the test of investigation . . . they are wanton calumniators, and should be shunned as pests to society (Loud cheers). . . . I admit there are hopes, gentlemen. There are hopes among a portion of those who had been snatched upon to fill out Ireland’s national crime dossier to apparently alarming proportions. The Dublin Conservative Press could usually be trusted when a Coercion Bill was in question to “dress up” trivialities, a reported shot in the night, for example, until they assumed catastrophic proportions.

¹ With the article on “The National League at Work” on April 12th.

² *Hansard*, Ap. 18, for the Division of 370–269.

³ *The Irish Question, Speech by the Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, April 19, 1887. H. H. Asquith, M.P., in the Chair.* This was issued by the Eighty Club, a combative Gladstonian Society to whom the speech had been made.

opposed us on the Irish Government Bill and who last night refrained from voting. My duty is . . . to shut no door against any man who desires that the door shall be kept open . . . no facts and information have been laid before us to warrant in any manner the tremendous demand that is made upon us (cheers): but on the contrary such information has been held back, and the statements of the Government on the introduction of this Bill stand in most glaring contrast—with . . . every other introductory statement of former years, inasmuch as it was deemed a duty, and absolutely necessary on the very threshold of such a business to lay before the House of Commons in the fullest and clearest terms the grounds on which unconstitutional demands were made (Hear, hear). That principle has been utterly thrown over, and why? It has been thrown over because there are no such facts to state . . . our contention is that there is no such exceptional state of crime and outrage in Ireland.” (Hear, hear.)

This was bonny fighting, which not only indicated a resolute continuance of opposition to the Crimes Bill inside and outside Parliament, but also the certainty that the attention of popular Radicalism would remain riveted to the struggle in a fashion Ministers did not like to contemplate. Thus even sycophantic journalists, who would have preferred to spend the “Jubilee summer” writing “loyal” accounts of the elaborate official grandeurs being planned, found the great popular reception accorded to Gladstone in Wales, early in June, impossible to ignore or to explain away.¹ What made the new “triumphal progress” the more significant was that Gladstone had not hesitated to make Irish Coercion and *The Times*’s treatment of Parnell the leading themes of his oratory.² On June 17th, only four days before the Jubilee Service at Westminster Abbey, came another event making it certain that the Jubilee would not affect current politics in the slightest. The Government forced the Committee stage of the Crimes Bill to an end by a use of the Closure, denounced by the

¹ Cf. *Illustrated London News*, June 11th: “The echoes of the enthusiastic shouts raised for the venerable yet hale and energetic statesman from Wrexham to Swansea have died out—but the importance of this remarkable demonstration in Wales, the weight to be attached to the multitudinous march-past of Welsh Liberal deputations, tens of thousands strong, cannot be overlooked. The inscription on one of the banners borne past Mr. Gladstone at Singleton Abbey ‘Union of Hearts, not of Manacles’ significantly summed up the opinion of the Welshmen on the Irish Home Rule Bill.”

² Cf. the pamphlet, *Speech by the Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone at Singleton Abbey, Glamorgan, Saturday, June 4, 1887*. It may be mentioned here that, with Parnell’s approval, Gladstone had asked for a Select Committee on *The Times*’s charge but he had been defeated by 317 votes against 233 (*Hansard*, May 6th). Parnell distrusted English courts and juries when dealing with a case of this kind, and not without reason.

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Irish and condemned by the Gladstonians.¹ And when Conservative journalists, emboldened by the holiday spirit temporarily called out by Jubilee fêtes and illuminations,² mocked at Gladstone's Closure protests and encouraged the Government to cut short the Report stage by similar methods, the electorate suddenly intervened with a crushing reminder that Conservative politics were still minority politics. The Spalding by-election of July 1st showed so marked a reversal of the polling-figures of the General Election of 1886 as to make it plain that the "Grand Old Man" was still the "people's" favourite statesman.³

For the time, however, neither the Spalding by-election nor the similar results that followed at Coventry, Bridgeton and the Forest of Dean could stay the Government's course. On July 8th a majority of 349 against 262 ordered the Crimes Bill to be read a third time; on July 19th, after a rapid passage through the Lords, the Bill was on the Statute Book; and, as early as July 23rd, eighteen Irish counties were being "proclaimed" under its powers.⁴ But, stimulated by the encouraging electoral position, Gladstone, in notable public addresses of July 29th, held up the "Dissentient

¹ Though the Committee had only reached Clause 6, the Government brought the whole Committee proceedings to a close at 10 p.m. on June 17th. The Gladstonians made their protest by leaving the House in a body rather than watch all the remaining clauses adopted without discussion (Cf. *The Times*, *Daily News*, etc., June 18th.)

² Lest it be thought that the Jubilee season was allowed to pass without Radical and Socialist protest, a quotation may be given from a handbill issued by the Council of the Metropolitan Radical Federation under the title of *The Queen's Jubilee, A Radical Protest*. "Fellow citizens," it urged, "pause and reflect. Do not give way to the madness of the moment. Royalty is the head and front of a foolish, wicked and costly system. You toil hard and your money is spent in maintaining princes and princesses, aristocrats, state priests, swarms of useless officials, and crowds of well-paid but inactive officers in the Army and Navy. Will you permit this for ever? Will you not rather make this Queen's Jubilee an occasion for considering whether a manly, self-respecting nation should continue to maintain a costly and degrading system of *privilege* by which idle men and women are lapt in luxury while many who help to support them die of starvation! Is it *right* that *three-quarters of a million* should be spent on the Royal family, while thousands are out of work?—refuse to join in the flunkey chorus with which the nation is being befooled, after being plundered and insulted. . . ." That there were members of Parliament, who had some sympathy with this point of view, was proved by the resistance that was made to the Government Bill to enable the Duke of Connaught to leave India for the Jubilee celebrations without forfeiting his Indian command. The Second Reading of the Duke of Connaught's Leave Bill found forty-five members voting in the "No" lobby. (*Hansard*, May 12th.)

³ *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1887 and 1888, for the increase of the Gladstonian poll from 4,273 to 5,110 and the decrease of the Conservative poll from 4,561 to 4,363.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1888, p. 359.

Liberals", and especially Bright and Chamberlain, as responsible for the unwelcome plight in which the nation found itself. Moreover, counselled thereto, perhaps, by Morley, who was in close touch with Schnadhorst's plans to win electoral control of the capital, Gladstone permitted himself the friendly references to the London leaseholder and the future London Municipality that were instantly recognised as signs of his "growing Radicalism".¹

On August 19th, while an Irish Land Bill, benevolent counterpart to the Crimes Bill and intended to show Ministers in the character of Ireland's truest friends, was approaching its concluding stages, the Cabinet ventured on a hazardous "proclamation" of the Irish National League.² Though the Crimes Bill itself had to be stretched to the utmost to warrant such a procedure, Ministers repulsed the Gladstonian attack by 272 votes against 194.³ But this "very satisfactory" majority at Westminster could not prevent the most formidable feeling from arising in Ireland nor much honest Radical indignation from being expressed in Great Britain. Indeed, when the first notable clash came between the Irish Constabulary and the protesting Irish population, it was at a meeting which was to have been addressed by Dillon and two brother-members from England, the Radicals Labouchere and Brunner. This meeting of September 9th at Mitchelstown, Co. Cork, called in sympathy with yet a fourth member, William O'Brien, M.P., whose prosecution under the Crimes Act had been ordered, saw an unhappy police muddle result in two men being shot dead and a third fatally wounded.⁴ When Dillon and Labouchere, speaking as eye-witnesses in Parliament on September 12th, flatly contradicted the police accounts and when, in addition, Balfour as Irish Secretary chose so inauspicious a season to announce that the imprisoned O'Brien could expect no "political prisoner" treatment despite his indifferent health, the materials were collected for a first-class political agitation.⁵

¹ *Illustrated London News*, August 6th, on Gladstone's speeches of July 29th at the National Liberal Club and the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street.

² *Ibid.*, August 20th and 27th, for the crisis narrowly averted by the Government. Chamberlain openly expressed his displeasure, and for a space it seemed possible that, aided by another remarkable by-election victory at Northwich, the Gladstonians might successfully reabsorb a considerable portion of the "Dissentients".

³ *Hansard*, August 26th.

⁴ *Illustrated London News*, September 17th and 24th, and *Hansard*, September 12th, Dillon and Labouchere.

⁵ Cf. the significant condemnation of the non-party *Illustrated London News*, September 17th: "Mr. Balfour rather pitilessly held there should be no difference

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This was proved not merely by such things as the Trade Union Congress of 1887 agreeing to suspend its Standing Orders so as to undertake a condemnation of Irish Coercion¹ or the hurrying-over to Ireland of a deputation from the English Home Rule Union to watch the O'Brien trial.² As one serious incident followed another in Ireland, as the tale of police violence,³ forbidden meetings⁴ and prosecuted newspapers mounted up,⁵ Gladstone found little difficulty in concentrating almost the entire strength of “advanced opinion” behind the Anti-Coercion cry. Gladstone and the Liberal leadership, moreover, partly from the removal of the check coming in the past from the “moderate Liberals” (headed by the Ducal houses of Bedford, Devonshire, Argyll, and Westminster, and now opposing Home Rule with the Conservatives), and partly from the inevitable influence of the opinions of the “masses” whose enthusiastic support was needed to drive Conservatism from power, increasingly associated Anti-Coercion

in the treatment of political and of ordinary prisoners—a harsh dictum which elicited strong remonstrances from Mr. John Morley, Mr. Labouchere, and Mr. Parnell, whose appeal to Irishmen to conduct their agitation in a constitutional manner will, I trust, not have been uttered in vain. Mr. Balfour sadly needs some of the *sauviter in modo* of his predecessor, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, to qualify him as an administrator for Ireland in these ticklish times.”

¹ Report.

² Cf. *Illustrated London News*, October 1st: “Mr. O'Brien . . . was followed into court by the English Home Rule deputation—who included Mrs. Bateson, Mr. Pickersgill, M.P., Mr. Gibb, Mr. Boyd, Mr. Harrison Carter and Mr. Heald. In the Court-house these were joined by Mr. J. Dillon, M.P., Mr. Maurice Healy, Mr. Rowntree, Mr. Lane, Dr. Tanner, Mr. Pyne, and Mr. T. Harrington, members of Parliament; Mrs. Rowntree, Mrs. Cobden Sickert, Miss Jane Cobden and Miss Mander; Mr. Leamy, Rev. Father O'Leary, of St. Louis; Judge Foster, of Iowa—and many others. The prosecution was conducted by Mr. Carson. . . .”

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, October 1st: “At Fermoy last Monday evening there was another fierce riot, with an attack on the hotel where two Magistrates were staying; the police had to use their truncheons—and many on both sides were seriously hurt”; and *Ibid.*, October 15th, on the conduct of “the Emergency men brought into the district (in Co. Wexford) to support the bailiffs”. A tenant who resisted eviction was shot dead and “other shots were fired by the Emergency men, who seem to have been more ferocious than the National League men. This affair has naturally excited great popular indignation. . . .”

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, October 29th: “At the town of Woodford in Galway, adjacent to the district where the evictions of the tenants of the Marquis of Clanricarde have caused many scenes of violence, prohibited meetings of the National League have recently been attempted in defiance of the Government proclamation. A strong force of the Irish Constabulary was sent to Woodford. On Sunday last, Mr. Wilfrid Blunt, an English gentleman of some note in the literary and political world, attempted to hold a meeting. He was accompanied by his wife, Lady Anne Blunt. He was conveyed to the police barracks.”

⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, October 15th, for the appearance of Mr. T. D. Sullivan, M.P., Lord Mayor of Dublin and proprietor of the *Nation* and his editor, T. Sexton, M.P., High Sheriff, before the Dublin police-court charged with reporting “the proceedings at a suppressed branch of the National League”.

agitation with definite and sometimes "startling" Radical commitments. There was certainly no better way of meeting Chamberlain's cry that, thanks to Home Rule, Gladstone had successfully blocked the way to Radical reforms for generations.

Why the increase in the Radicalism of the Liberal Front Bench was regarded by many political observers as little short of "momentous" will perhaps be best understood by following some of Gladstone's activities during October. On October 4th, for instance, he was replying to a Kidderminster deputation that had come upon a now customary pilgrimage to Hawarden with votive offering and address. Yet in a speech bound to be read by the "millions", he ventured thus to connect Irish Coercion and some questionable steps just taken by the Metropolitan Police in regard to the heightened autumn activities of the London Socialists:¹

I shall cling to the hope that we are misinformed . . . that the other day, in one of the districts of London, at twelve o'clock at night two policemen called upon a gentleman named Lyons to demand of him whether he was going to attend a public meeting, to demand of him who were to be the speakers and what was the object of it. This is a most extraordinary and unexpected result of the proceedings of last session. We had warned the people of England that the cause of Ireland was their cause, but in giving these warnings we did not expect the prediction to be so soon verified.

After phrases like these, some members of the Carlton Club would have held Gladstone at least partially responsible for the new "unemployed disturbances" raised by the Socialists at Trafalgar Square, the Mansion House, Bow Street and Westminster Abbey.² They reached a first climax in the continued conflict with the police raging near the Hyde Park exits and about the West End streets

¹ *Annual Register*, p. 155.

² *Ibid.*, p. 158. Cf. *Illustrated London News*, October 29th, for a long account of the Socialist demonstrations that had culminated in the Abbey scenes of October 23rd. "During the past two or three weeks", it said, "Londoners have been again made anxious. . . . On Sunday last, there being no shops open, and little traffic at Charing Cross, the promoters of social alarm could only find a way of disturbing respectable people by invading Westminster Abbey during afternoon service. Some two or three hundred gained an entrance. As soon as it was found (by the rest) that no more would be admitted, a meeting was improvised—with a self-elected chairman in the person of the Rev. Stewart Headlam who delivered a long speech, in which he said that the unemployed were quite right in the course they were pursuing. . . . Inside the Abbey . . . a disturbance arose in the Poet's Corner. . . . This was followed by further commotion at the north entrance. . . . The preacher's voice was quite inaudible a few yards from the pulpit. . . ."

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on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, October 18th, 19th and 20th.¹ And that the Working Men's Radical Clubs, not yet committed to Socialism, should have been adding to police problems by demonstrating simultaneously against Irish Coercion and against police violence to the unemployed, only seemed to strengthen the Carlton Club's case against Gladstone.²

While this alarming course of "mob-demonstrations" was already in progress in London, the "Grand Old Man" had, at seventy-seven, undertaken another "triumphal journey through the provinces" from Hawarden to the meeting of the National Liberal Federation at Nottingham.³ There had been early rumours that the Federation meeting would see a very bold bid made for popular support by the Liberal Front Bench,⁴ but, as was perhaps natural, Gladstone confined his first speech of

¹ *Illustrated London News*, October 29th. "The meetings in Hyde Park, on the Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of last week did not pass off without riots and severe conflicts. The police allowed the meetings to be held, but opposed every attempt to march out of the park in procession, and to make a demonstration of force either in Oxford Street—or in the streets adjacent to Grosvenor Square and Mayfair. . . . On the Tuesday afternoon, about three o'clock, there was a disorderly crowd of two or three thousand, led by a boy with a red flag. They were not permitted to go out in this manner through one of the small gates in Bayswater Road, and they threw stones at the police and struck them with sticks. . . . On the Wednesday there was a more serious riot. The usual meeting, with a red flag for its signal, was held near the 'Reformers' Tree', after which about two thousand men and boys went out by Grosvenor-gate. . . . The main body of the crowd passed into Berkeley Square, where, being reinforced by parties who had chosen more circuitous routes, it assumed formidable proportions. On Thursday, another meeting took place in Hyde Park, where about 3,000 assembled. . . . A further conflict took place. The police were quickly reinforced, and, after a scrimmage of four or five minutes, succeeded in routing the rioters. . . . The Trafalgar Square meetings were resumed on Monday and Tuesday last, but with diminished numbers. They were followed, on each occasion, by the march of a crowd. They were closely followed by the mounted and foot police, and were not permitted to stop anywhere. . . ."

² *Ibid.* "The meeting at Millpond-bridge, Jamaica Road, Rotherhithe, last Monday evening, arranged in concert by five political clubs of Bermondsey, Rotherhithe and Southwark, had no direct connection with the demonstrations of "the unemployed", though it passed a resolution protesting against the conduct of Sir Charles Warren as Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. It was mainly intended to express indignation against the Irish policy of the present Government. Sir Charles Warren had forbidden torchlight processions, but a number of torches were burnt on the platforms of which there were five, each with its separate chairman and speakers. . . . About twelve hundred police attended the meeting. . . ."

³ *Ibid.*, October 22nd. Besides a speech at a Manchester luncheon, Gladstone "had to make brief speeches from his saloon at Sheffield and Newark" (railway stations). On his return journey he spoke at the Drill Hall, Derby, at Leeds and at Ripon.

⁴ *Ibid.*, October 15th, for the rumour that Harcourt was preparing a "platform" of Disestablishment, abolition or reconstruction of the House of Lords, Home Rule and a drastic change of the Land Laws.

October 18th largely to Irish Coercion. Yet on this subject Gladstone hit hard enough to delight the great assembly of middle-class politicians, gathered by Schnadhorst in the hope of seeing a great blow delivered for "human freedom" and a Liberal return to office.¹ Having already coined the phrase "Remember Mitchelstown", Gladstone now proceeded to castigate the Irish police, the Government and the Coercion Bill in language alleged by his opponents to be outrageous in an ex-Prime Minister.²

"To speak plainly," he declared, "I say that the law was broken by the agents of the law, and that it is idle to speak to the Irish people about obeying the law, if the very Government that so speaks and that brings these bills, has agents which break the law by advisedly and violently breaking the order of public meeting and which are sustained in that illegal action. . . ."

This was certainly a good omen for vigour on the morrow, and on October 19th, indeed, Gladstone accepted a more "advanced" programme than had ever appeared likely before the events of 1887. "One Man, One Vote", "Free Trade in Land", Local Self-Government not merely for counties but even for parishes, Readjustment of Rates "to be effected justly, and not unjustly, as in former years when labour had been made to contribute to redress the inequalities of taxation upon property", Local Option, Welsh and Scottish Disestablishment (the English case was skilfully left in question) and Home Rule³—here was a programme fascinating at once in its promise of electoral triumph and in its complete freedom from the economic heresies of Tory "Fair Traders" on the one side or "Utopian Socialists" on the other. The enthusiasm reported among the middle-class delegates at Nottingham is understandable particularly as Gladstone's continued physical vigour promised to be a wonderful electoral asset whenever a Dissolution could be forced.

The "resolution" shown by the Government during November served only to increase the fervour with which it was opposed and denounced. The continued denial of "political prisoner" status to the imprisoned O'Brien, and the attempt to make him undergo the full ignominy and rigour of the "hard labour" penalty of the

¹ *Illustrated London News*, October 22nd.

² *Annual Register*, 1887, p. 160, for the speaking which Balfour attacked at the first opportunity.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

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Crimes Act was, in view of his resolve to die rather than submit, an enormous mistake.¹ It served to unify Irish national feeling round a martyr,² and called out a tempest of anger even in England which taxed the Government to the utmost. When the Metropolitan Radical Federation called London working men to a protest-demonstration in Trafalgar Square, and the Metropolitan Police Commissioner announced that the meeting would not be permitted, the situation was felt to have become critical. On the one hand the Socialist and Irish Societies determined to contribute their utmost to make the Radical processions converging on Trafalgar Square from different points of the metropolis as imposing as possible, and on the other hand the Home Office concentrated all available police strength in Trafalgar Square and called on the War Office for assistance. Veritable battles took place between the Government forces and the "People" on Sunday afternoon, November 13th,³ and there were many moderate

¹ *Illustrated London News*, November 19th, for an illustrated account. O'Brien had been sentenced at Mitchelstown on September 9th, the day of the shootings, arrested in Dublin on September 11th and then released on bail pending an appeal. His appeal failed on October 31st, and in Cork Gaol he refused to put on prison clothes or clean his cell. As the Mayor of Cork was a visiting justice of Cork Gaol and threatened to visit every day, O'Brien was removed to another prison amid intense Irish excitement. There his own clothes were taken from him but he still refused to wear prison garb or to do anything to his cell. The Government gave way practically, if not technically, by putting him into hospital, but even there he caused anxiety by refusing to don prison shirts.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, December 3rd, for pictures of the great Dublin meeting of protest of November 23rd.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, November 19th, for a long account and many pictures. "Altogether there were", it says, "1,500 policemen in the square; 2,500 were employed in breaking up processions and in reserve; 300 of the Grenadiers . . . were brought out with fixed bayonets. . . . The 1st Life Guards were called out at four. . . . It was in the streets by which the several processions from Clerkenwell, from Notting Hill, from the east of London along the Strand, and from South London over Westminster Bridge, sought to approach Trafalgar Square, that the fighting actually began. A meeting had been held in Clerkenwell-green, where resolutions were proposed and speeches made by Mr. Poole, Mrs. Besant, Dr. Aveling, Mr. W. Fuller and Mr. W. Morris, the poet. It was a combined affair of the 'London Patriotic Club', the Irish Home Rule Union, and the Socialist Democratic Federation. A procession was formed headed by the bands of the East Finsbury Radical Club and St. Peter's, Clerkenwell, with red banners. As the procession turned down to St. Martin's Lane, a detachment of mounted police rode into their midst and scattered them, being seconded by a strong force of police on foot. The crowd offered a strong resistance. The procession from Peckham, Bermondsey, Deptford and Battersea met at Westminster Bridge. There were in the crowd about fifteen banners with devices; for these the police aimed. Just before four o'clock, an excited movement was visible among the crowd at the Strand entrance to the square, and a column of about four hundred men advanced, led by Mr. Cuninghame Graham, M.P., and Mr. Burns, the well-known Socialist, who had come with the avowed intention of testing the legality of Sir Charles Warren's proclamation. Mr. Graham is alleged to have

persons who, if pleased that "Law and Order" had been successfully vindicated, harboured the strongest doubts as to whether the Government had not shown the worst possible judgement in allowing the O'Brien situation in Ireland and England to reach such a pass.

These "moderates" were the very people whom Gladstone was trying to win over to the view that a modified version of his Home Rule Bill offered a better solution of the Irish impasse than never-ending Coercion troubles. And certainly he, and even such an "advanced" follower of his as Bradlaugh, were given the opportunity to look satisfyingly moderate during the grave days following the clashes of November 13th, when the Police Commissioner began swearing in special constables in order to augment the forces at his disposal.¹ Furious at the police "illegalities" and violence that had been employed against them, the Radical, Socialist and Irish clubs immediately began planning a renewed march on Trafalgar Square to take place in still stronger force on Sunday, November 20th. As early as November 14th Gladstone was writing from Hawarden to the Bermondsey Gladstone Club urging that, until a legal decision on the Metropolitan Police Commissioner's action had been arrived at, it appeared to him indisputable that it was "the duty of every citizen to refrain from all resistance to the decision of the Executive Government, which is clearly entitled to administer the laws according to what it may be advised is their true construction".² On the same day Bradlaugh telegraphed from Hull appealing to "London workmen to leave the right of meeting for decision in the Law Courts, and for vindication in the House of Commons when Parliament meets".³ When moderates thereupon took to hoping that "these sober made a determined rush at the police. . . . More than 150 persons were conducted to the neighbouring hospitals for surgical treatment. Nearly 300 rioters were taken prisoners—some were sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour for one, two, three or six months. The case of Mr. Cuninghame Graham and Mr. Burns was adjourned."

¹ *Illustrated London News*, November 26th, for the special constables used on November 20th, 2,000 in the Northern District under Major-General Bray, 550 in the Southern District under Major-General Hall, 3,000 in the Western District under Major-General Fielding and 800 in the Eastern District under Colonel Micklem. They included "many gentlemen of high social position, retired officers of the Army and Navy, professional men, clerks, tradesmen, shop assistants . . . a hundred men employed as ushers, messengers, and servants of the High Courts of Justice . . ." and "in the City the applicants embraced bankers, merchants, members of the Stock exchange, solicitors, accountants, clerks . . .".

² *Ibid.*, November 19th.

³ *Ibid.*

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counsels will prevail over mischievous advice offered in other quarters: for a repetition of such deplorable scenes as took place last Sunday . . . might be attended with the greatest danger",¹ Gladstone began to take on almost the appearance of a pillar of sanity. And when the plans for November 20th ended in police-escorted processions to Hyde Park, there to pass denunciations of Irish Coercion and the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, the worst winter-danger of 1887 might be over, but not the violent dislike of the "masses" for the Government.² It seems almost certain that if a popular poll could have been taken at this stage, the Ministers, for all their play with the alleged statistics of past Gladstonian Coercion,³ would have been swept from power by a possibly sensational vote. It must have been a comfort to them and to their Liberal Unionist allies to remember that, thanks to the Septennial Act, they could, if they remained united, hold on to power for over five years more. Much might happen before 1892 or 1893 including the physical collapse of the "Grand Old Man".

¹ *Illustrated London News*, November 19th.

² *Ibid.*, November 26th, for an unfriendly account of the Hyde Park meeting, minimising the numbers present to 40,000 "of whom the great majority were idle spectators" though explaining this by the "damp, gloomy, misty and chilly weather". The resolutions passed were:

"That this meeting regards the imprisonment of Mr. O'Brien, M.P., and other Irish patriots as an act of tyranny. . . ."

"That this meeting condemns the conduct of the Government in allowing the Commissioner of Police to proclaim away the hitherto undisputed right of the people to hold bona-fide meetings in Trafalgar Square, and desires to record its indignation and disgust at the wanton brutality of the police last Sunday—a brutality which has excited the surprise of the civilised world."

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, November 12th, for a "characteristically smart address" from Balfour at the Birmingham Town Hall on November 4th: "He emphatically denounced Mr. Gladstone for his alleged encouragement of lawlessness, and his efforts to paralyse the hand of Government in Ireland. Cheered by the jocose cry of 'Rub it in!' Mr. Balfour quoted figures to prove his case:

"During the period of Lord Salisbury's Ministry there have been 400 public meetings held in Ireland, and of these twelve, and twelve only, have been stopped by the order of the Government. That is to say, one meeting in thirty-three. During Mr. Gladstone's Administration 351 meetings were to be held in Ireland of which fifty-five were stopped. That is to say, he stopped one meeting out of eight." Needless to say this account is "tricky" in several different directions but it was safer to make it from a Birmingham platform than from the Treasury Bench in the House of Commons. There, for example, Parnell had on September 12th forced Balfour to admit that his alleged 130 "proclaimed meetings" of 1881 might be whittled down to "thirty meetings proper". (*Ibid.*, September 17th.)

CHAPTER III

THE OPPOSITION'S GROWING RADICALISM, 1888

"The right honourable gentleman (Mr. Balfour) was especially indignant with me because . . . I had telegraphed to a correspondent the words 'Remember Mitchelstown'. Moreover I had in a speech at Nottingham developed my meaning . . . I never in my life uttered words . . . which I am better contented to have employed than the words 'Remember Mitchelstown' (Cheers). . . . The police . . . were themselves guilty of illegality and ought to have been taken into custody (Loud cheers). That was the first act of the police—what was the second? a wilful, arbitrary wanton charge upon the crowd . . . as to the two old men and the boy whom they destroyed I do not hesitate here to denounce this mode of action as cruel, wanton and disgraceful bloodshed. (Prolonged Opposition cheers.) It recalls the period of Lord Sidmouth. It was bloodshed which, so far as I know, has had no example in wantonness and carelessness since the memorable occasion in Manchester, popularly known as the Peterloo Massacre. It was time I should say 'Remember Mitchelstown' (Cheers). . . . Mitchelstown was commended by the right honourable gentleman. Mitchelstown was practically held up to the police of Ireland as a pattern they were to follow. . . . I tell the right honourable gentleman frankly that I am of opinion that he has become by implication and by his own deliberate act, a breaker of the law (Loud cheers)."

Gladstone lets out with astonishing vigour and "disregard" of the consequences, House of Commons, February 17, 1888.

On Gladstone at the Limehouse Town Hall, December 15, 1888.

"Turning to domestic affairs he charged the Government once more with wasting the time of the House of Commons, and with using its majority in a tyrannical and unscrupulous manner, while at the same time he dwelt on the forbearance which had been shown by the Parnellites and the positive assistance given to the Government by the Opposition. He then dealt with the Clerkenwell programme of Mr. Morley, accepting almost every item . . . 'one man, one vote', shorter parliaments, the taxation of ground rents, leasehold enfranchisement, the control—not to be given immediately but to come in time—of the metropolitan police, the improvement of

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artisans' dwellings, free schools and disestablishment in Scotland and Wales."

From the *Annual Register's* summary.

"During the last two years, and since the passing of the Crimes Act of 1887, no fewer than twenty-two out of the one hundred and three representatives of Ireland (together with 'about eighteen priests, a very large number of professional men, editors of newspapers, lawyers, respectable tradesmen and well-to-do farmers, some sixteen hundred men of the classes of tenant-farmers and labourers, and some few women and children') have been prosecuted, convicted and imprisoned, many of them on two, three, or more different occasions, without trial by jury, for offences for the most part newly created by that Act, and which are not offences under any existing law in other parts of the United Kingdom, and which in all other cases could, under the ordinary law, have been only tried before juries. Of these twenty-two members, only three have escaped being treated, during some part, if not the whole period of their imprisonment as common criminals . . . Mr. O'Brien, as is well known, resisted this treatment. . . . The Chief Secretary lost no opportunity of throwing ridicule and contempt on Mr. W. O'Brien. Speaking on the subject at Dublin on February 4, 1889, at the annual dinner of the Liberal Unionists of Ireland, Mr. Balfour aroused the loud laughter of his hosts by the following language: 'I take little interest in these histrionic performances. I took a small interest only in the first representation. . . . But as apparently the powers of Nationalist misrepresentation have turned their full energy and vigour upon this familiar and congenial topic, I ought perhaps to say a word on the communication I have received about a quarter to one last night (Prolonged laughter) with regard to Mr. O'Brien's treatment in prison. . . . I read "illegal and brutal violence" (Laughter) that is not it (Laughter) "unexampled indignation" (Laughter) "system of attacking—and breaking down your opponent by torture" (Laughter). No that is not it. Here it is. "Mr. O'Brien has now been naked in his cell for thirty-one hours (Roars of laughter) and to-night we learn that he is lying speechless. . . ."

"The tone of this speech, and the indecent bursts of laughter with which it was received, profoundly affected public opinion. . . . In the same strain, the Prime Minister speaking a little later at Watford, on March 19th, cast his scoffs and gibes at his political opponent in prison. He spoke in contemptuous terms of the 'tragic nudity of Mr. William O'Brien and of his lying on his back and kicking at a warder'."

The Front-Bench Radical, Shaw-Lefevre, in *Irish Members and English Gaolers* (1889).

IN the Prorogation Speech from the Throne delivered at the end of the 1887 Session, Ministers had made the Queen say: "The wants and difficulties of Ireland have occupied your attention during a protracted Session. . . . In order to pass (remedies) it has been necessary to postpone the consideration of many important measures affecting other parts of the United Kingdom, which I doubt not you will be able to resume without hindrance in the coming Session. . . ." ¹

The Cabinet's determination to make the 1888 Session, as much as possible, an "English" one was only increased by the events of the Recess. In view of their rapidly worsening position in the constituencies, Chamberlain and his National Radical Union had urgent need of palpable and immediately conceded "progressive reforms" in order to convince Radical Unionist waverers, smitten already by a dangerous nostalgia for the "Grand Old Man" and the "Grand Old Causes", that the alliance with Conservatism in defence of the Irish Union, might actually facilitate the achievement of "progress". ² Moreover, the steadily growing stream of Coercion news from Ireland, as the full rigour of the Crimes Act came to be applied, made it advisable to offer even "moderate opinion" some hopeful counter-distraction from the gloomy and increasing catalogue of Irish proclamations, police batonings and arrests. ³ Finally, "bold domestic reform" promised to strengthen the Government's ability to deal "firmly" with "Socialist disorders" in the capital.

The "bold domestic reform" which the Conservative Cabinet had already come to look upon as inevitable was a measure of Local Government democratisation. Indeed, the able but not very

¹ *Illustrated London News*, September 24, 1887.

² As against the huge volume of angry protest excited by Irish Coercion, Conservatives and Chamberlainites had already been driven to overstress the importance of the relatively petty Allotments Act of 1887 as well as to over-rate the Government's share in the 1887 Coal Mines Regulation Act.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, December 10th, for fierce Limerick riots after the "proclamation" of a meeting on November 27th. Batons proving ineffective, bayonets were ultimately resorted to. The same number reports a sentence of two months' imprisonment inflicted on the Lord Mayor of Dublin (T. D. Sullivan, M.P.) for having published in his paper, the *Nation*, reports of proceedings of suppressed branches of the National League; notes the prosecution of Timothy Harrington, M.P., and Edward Harrington, M.P., charged with like offences in the *Kerry Sentinel*; comments on the violent disturbances at Killarney Station while one of the Harringtons was being taken through under arrest; and forecasts the probability of further Press prosecutions under the Crimes Act of 1887.

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well-connected C. T. Ritchie had been appointed President of the Local Government Board and elevated to Cabinet rank partly in the expectation that his unusual aptitude for administrative detail would eventually help the Ministry to produce a trump card in Reform of Local Government. But though Ritchie's drafts for a wide and bold Bill must have been virtually complete in 1887, Parliament had to wait until March 19, 1888, for his very able speech, before the First Reading, explaining the notable legislative innovations projected in his Local Government Bill for England and Wales. As was, perhaps, inevitable in view of the acute party controversy raging on the Crimes Act and its drastic and unpopular curtailment of Irish liberties,¹ the opening of Parliament on February 9th had straightway plunged the Commons into a long Irish controversy which Gladstone once again entered, on the 17th, with remarkable effect.² The proceedings on the Address had been further protracted by such things as Radical care for the Indian taxpayer and the Scottish crofter. And subsequently, while the Government had kept the Commons occupied with new Procedure rules, the Estimates and the Exchequer's Debt Conversion plan, Radicals had still found plenty of opportunity for challenge. Thus, on March 1st and 2nd, had occurred a warm debate on Metropolitan Police action against democratic Trafalgar Square meetings;³ on March 9th Labouchere had once more made war on an Hereditary Second Chamber; on March 13th Government of India finance was challenged a second time; and on March 14th, Bradlaugh had obtained a majority of 250 against 50 for an Oaths

¹ On February 1st Lord Ripon and Mr. Morley had been welcomed to Dublin with a torchlight procession; and on February 13th the London Radical Clubs had organised a great demonstration to Mr. T. D. Sullivan, M.P., after his release from serving a sentence under the Crimes Act. On February 20th a great reception was accorded in the Commons to two Home Rule by-election victors from Dundee and West Southwark, and it was repeated next day in honour of the West Edinburgh member, who had carried his constituency triumphantly with him in his resolve to re-enlist under Gladstone.

² Cf. *Illustrated London News*, February 25th, on "Mr. Gladstone's marvellously eloquent and vigorous two hours' speech delivered with the full volume of his old silvery eloquence . . . spirit-stirring in the extreme (it) naturally roused the enthusiastic cheers of the excited Home Rulers whose cause he once again pleaded with a sustained power none of them could rival". An extract will be found at the head of this chapter.

³ Especially the "brutally suppressed meeting" of November 13, 1887, and the virtual denial by the police of the right of meeting in Trafalgar Square since that date. On the main division the Opposition raised 224 votes against the Government's 316 (*Hansard*, March 2nd) and might have raised more but for Trafalgar Square's special identification with "Socialist" disorders of the "most dangerous kind".

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Bill which promised to safeguard future atheist M.P.s from the troubles he had undergone.

But if day-to-day business of this kind continued to have its absorbing interest for Radicals; if Irish Coercion, Scottish Crofters, Welsh Tithes and English Small Holdings; if Trafalgar Square, Perpetual Pensions,¹ the Metropolitan Police and the misdeeds of the Corporation of London² continued, with less explosive matters,³ to give the Radical politicians, journalists and Clubs plenty of occupation, March 19th, the date of the introduction of Ritchie's Local Government proposals, remained nevertheless a turning-point in the Sessional history of 1888. Ritchie had, in fact, boldly cut a number of knots which otherwise might have given the Tory party infinite trouble for years. County Administration, for instance, was in large part handed over to elective bodies without any attempt to force in privileged contingents of J.P.s. London, too, as defined in the Metropolis Management Act of 1855, was to be taken out of the counties of Middlesex, Kent and Surrey and made into a county by itself with its own Lord-Lieutenant, Bench of Magistrates and elective County Council. In the financial relations between the Exchequer and the new authorities, another innovation was attempted when certain national revenues were definitely assigned to County Council use in replacement of year-to-year grants-in-aid formerly made to the County Magistrates. And if the Local Government Bill also boldly attempted to tidy up local sanitary administration by creating uniform District Councils within the county, if it actually ventured into the "Radical extravagance" of removing even liquor-licensing from magistrates' control and handing it over to County Council Divisional Licensing Committees, the Local Government Electors Bill which accompanied it, was, from the older Tory point of view, just as questionable.⁴ A "democratic" local electorate was frankly

¹ *Hansard*, March 19th, for Bradlaugh's successful motion for a Select Committee of Inquiry into this old *bête noire* of the "millions".

² *Ibid.*, May 8th, for Firth and Bradlaugh using revelations just made, of the dubious City expenditure in the unsuccessful effort to prevent the setting up of the London County Council and to secure the renewal of the Coal and Wine Dues.

³ Such as the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill of the year carried at Second Reading on April 18th by 239-182; the demand, powerfully supported by Gladstone, for the equalisation of Real Property (Succession) taxation with that already paid by Personal Property, and defeated on April 23rd by 217-310; the "Labour" Payment of Members resolution, defeated on July 6th by 135-192; and even Professor Bryce's Access to Mountains Bill to stop Scottish landowners forbidding innocent passage through vast Highland areas.

⁴ Toby M.P. reporting for *Punch* (March 31st) noted that some of the

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accepted as the only possibility, and all notions of special electoral devices to qualify the power of the "democracy", and to "safeguard property", were finally abandoned once and for all.

It throws a special light, at once, on Gladstone's tremendous prestige and his unrivalled experience, to find the journalists attaching special significance to his warm praise for Ritchie and yet noting that, while praising, he left the way open for a dangerous attack on Ritchie's leaders by criticising the absence of Local Government Bills for Scotland and Ireland. Indeed, after the Opposition had allowed Ritchie an uncontested Second Reading as well as a First, contenting itself during the lengthy debates of April 12th to April 20th with recording the amendments it would press at the Committee stage, the absence of a Local Government Bill for Ireland became an issue with its anxieties for the Government. On April 25th a Parnellite Local Government Bill for Ireland was debated which presented Ministers with awkward tactical problems. Their ally Chamberlain, for instance, had long been pledged to such a measure—and as a mere instalment!—while the watchful Lord Randolph Churchill, still hopeful of having his "tit for tat" with his former colleagues, was certain to remind the House that, as its Leader in 1886, he had been allowed to promise Ireland Elective County Governments simultaneously with England. And if, in the event, the Government finally emerged with a majority of 282-195, Lord Randolph Churchill's accusation of broken promises had none the less put Ministers in the most unpleasant of predicaments.¹

Problems of another kind faced the Cabinet when the Local Government Bill approached the Committee stage. To begin with, the Opposition had drafted a number of amendments intended to correct the democratic deficiencies of the Bill, where they existed, and so there was always the possibility that, on one or another of these amendments, sufficient Radical Unionists would be recruited to put the Government in difficulties. Thus, on June 7th, before going into Committee at all, the House had to Conservative Benches gave Ritchie's proposals a frigid reception. Gladstone, on the other hand, was made to tell Toby that the Opposition, if in power, would never have dared to bring in such a "thoroughly Radical measure as Ritchie's. If we had, we would have wasted three Sessions in urging it on."

¹ Cf. H. W. Lucy, *A Diary of the Salisbury Parliament, 1886-1892*, under April 25, 1888: "This speech fell like a bombshell on the Treasury bench . . . again and again triumphant cheers from the Opposition benches punctuated Lord Randolph's telling sentences. . . . Lord Randolph's attack on the Government was taken, if not in concert with Mr. Chamberlain, at least with his full knowledge."

dispose of Mr. Stevenson's amendment that it should be an instruction to the Committee to democratise the Parish Vestries which, with the Boards of Guardians, had been left out of Mr. Ritchie's Bill. When Mr. Stevenson secured support both from Gladstone and Chamberlain and the Government's majority shrank to 45, it was plain that Ritchie was facing his most formidable ordeal.¹ That lesson was rapidly enforced, and on the very next day Ritchie found it advisable to agree that all boroughs with over 50,000 inhabitants should themselves be set up as quasi-counties under the style of County Boroughs. On June 11th, nevertheless, Mr. Stansfeld, a Gladstonian ex-President of the Local Government Board, made a dangerous democratic challenge to Ritchie's plan for admitting, into the future County Councils, a section of non-elective aldermen to be selected by the elected Councillors themselves. Ritchie's professed desire was to permit inexperienced Councils, if they so desired, to avail themselves of the special knowledge acquired under the old County régime by many who were unable to adapt themselves to the new democratic necessity of wooing and winning an electorate before entering of right into the Shire Halls. But though Ritchie convinced Chamberlain of the wisdom of his proposal, a mere Government majority of 250 against 214 showed that Stansfeld's dislike of the possibility of powerful undemocratic elements entering into, and even taking control of the County Councils, was widely shared.

Ritchie's next troubles came from the Licensing Clauses which, while ostensibly bestowing on County Council Divisional Committees the power to close "redundant" public-houses, provided for compensation on a basis pleasing to the publican, but ominous for the ratepayer and the "Temperance Movement". After W. S. Caine, the Chamberlainite Whip, had begun a threatening temperance campaign in conjunction with the Gladstonians, Ministers decided to withdraw their proffered "Licensing Reform". Thus it was that, on June 12th, Ritchie emerged from an important Cabinet to tell the House amid "ironical Opposition cheers" that in order to facilitate the passage of the rest of the Bill, the Licensing Clauses would be abandoned.² On June 15th the President of

¹ *Hansard*, June 7th.

² *Illustrated London News*, June 16th. The abandonment of the Licensing Clauses automatically meant the reinstatement of the J.P.s in their old Licensing powers. But the Temperance men considered even this preferable to permitting the Government to bestow upon the "Liquor Trade", for the first time, a statutory right to compensation for extinguished licences, a right

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the Local Government Board was called upon to face yet another type of challenge, this time from the Liberal Unionist, Mr. Heneage, who had resigned the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster at the time of the great "Home Rule split", in the spring of 1886, but had not been averse, since, to displaying an occasional democratic independence of the Tory Ministers. When Heneage opposed Ritchie's denial of police powers to the new County Councils, powers such as had long been enjoyed by the Town Council Watch Committees, he was, in fact, coming to grips with the most "undemocratic" feature of the Bill. And if Heneage's amendment, to transfer the control of the police to the County Councils was defeated by 264 votes against 218, a less far-reaching challenge met with a different result on June 19th. If control of the county police force was to be, as Ritchie desired, in the hands of the Standing Joint Committee of Quarter Sessions and the County Council, then, argued John Morley, why not also transfer to it, instead of leaving to Quarter Sessions, the appointment, control and dismissal of the Chief Constable? And Morley's defeat of the Government, by 246 votes against 216, might well have proved critical, coming, as it did, after two remarkable Gladstonian by-election gains, at opposite ends of the country,¹ were held to have demonstrated the nation's growing distaste for Irish Coercion.

But the Government Whips worked harder; Liberal and Radical Unionists were brought to see the danger of occasional displays of democratic independence; and Ritchie, abandoning his District Council clauses, succeeded in completing the Committee stages of the Local Government Bill by July 19th—a date which made legislation possible before the contemplated dispersion of Parliament for an adjournment lasting from August 13th to November 6th. It was the "Irish Question", in fact, always breaking through in one form or another even during the height of the Local Government discussions,² which again became the

threatening overwhelming burdens in the future to the ratepayers of areas adopting strong Temperance policies. Goschen's transfer of the local Licence Duty yields would, by itself, only permit the most cautious "Temperance" policy to be financed, more especially if public-house values rose sharply as a result of the new guarantee of compensation.

¹ There had been a decisive Gladstonian gain from the Conservatives at Southampton on May 23rd, and an even more sensational gain from the Liberal Unionists in the Ayrshire District (of Burghs) on June 15th.

² Apart from such earlier controversy as that occasioned on May 14th by the arrest of Mr. John Dillon, M.P., see *Hansard*, June 25th and 26th, for the great debate on the general effect of the Crimes Act of 1887 and its administration.

centre of political controversy while Ritchie's Bill went through its final stages towards the Statute Book. This in itself is hardly surprising. But some explanation is called for as to why the Irish controversy of July and August 1888 centred not upon the "questionable" administration of the Crimes Act by police, Resident Magistrates and County Court Judges,¹ nor yet upon the number of prominent Irishmen sentenced under its clauses and treated in gaol as hard-labour prisoners,² but rather upon the Government Bill officially known as the Members of Parliament (Charges and Allegations) Bill.

It will, perhaps, be remembered how *The Times* had helped the passage of the Crimes Act by its two series of articles on *Parnellism and Crime*. The most notorious article in *The Times* series had been that published on April 18, 1887, when the critical Second Reading Division on the Crimes Bill was expected. In that article, an alleged signature of Parnell had been reproduced at the foot of a letter which was peculiarly calculated to envenom British opinion against the Irish leader as a hypocrite, who gulled Gladstone by protesting against the Phoenix Park murders in public while, in private, he conveyed very different sentiments to the quarters always planning such assassinations. Though Parnell had at once denounced *The Times* for printing an impudent forgery and though Gladstone had, thereupon, immediately demanded a Select Committee of Inquiry, the Government had preferred to take the view that Parnell's proper course, if he had a grievance, was to go to the Courts with an action for libel against *The Times*. But Parnell had the profoundest distrust of English Courts and jurors (particularly special jurors)³ in a case which involved deep-seated national and social prejudices. And he seems to have estimated correctly how impossible Court procedure might make it to isolate

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, April 24th, for the warm debate in the Commons after County Court Judges, hearing appeals from Resident Magistrates under the Crimes Act, ventured to increase the sentences appealed against. It was a procedure of dubious wisdom.

² A useful item in the agitation against the Crimes Act proved to be the decease of a Mr. Mandeville whose death, some time after his release from Tullamore Gaol, an Irish Coroner's jury ascribed to his "brutal" treatment within. Even Gladstone was sufficiently impressed by the evidence of five medical witnesses to make use of the case in a public speech during the adjournment of Parliament.

³ It need hardly be said that if the qualification for common jurymen was such as to exclude the "masses", the special juror was, in a political trial, still more likely to be class-biased. Yet in the *O'Donnell v. The Times* trial of July 1888, *The Times* could and did ask for a special jury.

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the special issue of the Phoenix Park letter from the mountain of Land League, National League, and Clan-na-Gael "outrages" which *The Times* defence was sure to pile up.

Parnell's complete justification for refusing to go to the High Courts came on July 5, 1888, when O'Donnell, another Irishman who claimed to have been libelled in the *Parnellism and Crime* series, had his suit against *The Times* dismissed with heavy costs, and after a trial that was almost scandalous. The Attorney-General, for example, had not scrupled to lead the defence for *The Times* and had thought proper to impress the Court with the importance of a number of sensational new letters which Parnell, from his place in Parliament, immediately declared to be "absolute forgeries".¹ Parnell was, therefore, in a strong position when, on July 9th, he asked for a Select Committee to investigate the authenticity of the allegations that had been made against him at the O'Donnell trial to which he was not a party and which he could not otherwise rebut. Though the Conservative Leader of the House again took the view that Parnell's dispute with *The Times* should be taken to the Courts, Parnell, aware that the tactical position had now changed in his favour, found very wide support in his demand for "an opportunity of repelling the foul and untruthful charges which have been made against me by the Attorney-General".²

On July 12th the Government, convinced that a mere continuation of its bland invitations to Parnell to bring a libel action against *The Times* would no longer serve its purpose, announced a new resolution. Ministers offered Parnell not a Select Committee, but what, it was claimed, would make a more judicial inquiry possible into the allegations that had been made against him, a Commission composed wholly or mainly of Judges. Introduced on July 16th, the resulting Members of Parliament (Charges and Allegations) Bill engendered heat from the very first.³ On the occasion of the "engrossing" Second Reading Debate, indeed, on July 23rd and 24th, Labouchere, the Radical, moved the rejection of the Government measure as completely unfair to Parnell who, instead of being given the limited inquiry into the authenticity of the letters read

¹ *Hansard*, July 6th. In one letter, worse in its implications even than the Phoenix Park letter, Parnell had been made virtually to call for assassinations.

² *Ibid.*, July 9th.

³ Besides Parnell himself, Justin McCarthy, T. P. O'Connor, Mr. Sexton, Mr. Arthur O'Connor, Mr. Healy, Mr. Biggar, the Messrs. Redmond and Mr. William O'Brien might be held entitled to a *locus standi*.

by the Attorney-General during the O'Donnell case, was going to be involved in endless "collateral" investigations affording the Government special facilities for concealing the central issue and preventing a full vindication of Parnell. But Labouchere's amendment was withdrawn at Parnell's own request and with the intention of forcing further concessions from the Government at the Committee stage.

As was almost inevitable in the circumstances, some of the bitterest debating of the whole Session was heard between July 30th and August 2nd when the Charges and Allegations Bill was in Committee. On July 30th the appointment of Mr. Justice Day as one of the three members of the "Parnell Commission" was hotly resisted after Morley quoted a correspondent who reported of him that "He nightly railed against Parnell and his friends. He regards them as infidels and 'Reds' who have led astray the Catholic nation. . . ." Later that evening Parnell began some sensational revelations as to Chamberlain's readiness to deal with him after the Phoenix Park murders and behind the backs of his colleagues. And the situation was further envenomed on July 31st when it transpired that Mr. Walter of *The Times* had seen the Leader of the House just when the Parnell Commission Bill was being drafted.¹ Whether *The Times* and the Government already saw reason to be dubious about the authenticity of the alleged Parnell letters is uncertain. Certain it is, however, that the Opposition guessed that the Government was uneasy and pressed Ministers hard. Even on August 8th, after the Irish party and the Gladstonian Front Bench had decided neither to oppose nor to support the Third Reading of the "Parnell Commission Bill", Labouchere induced a large group of British Radicals to divide against it and record a vote of 64 against the Government's 180.²

During the long Parliamentary Recess, the Irish Question could not be prevented from keeping the foremost place in national politics. On August 18th, for instance, a great rally of Lincolnshire Liberals was rededicated to the cause of "Justice for

¹ Cf. H. W. Lucy, *A Diary of the Salisbury Parliament, 1886-1892*, p. 101: "Inexorably pressed from the Opposition benches, he finally admitted that Mr. Walter, in quite a casual way *had* mentioned the Parnell Commission Bill; but that he had in any way influenced the action of the Government in drafting it Mr. Smith denied in an excited manner that was as painful to witness as it was ineffectual in supporting his case."

² *Hansard*, August 8th.

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Ireland" by John Morley and Lord Ripon;¹ on August 20th Gladstone addressed to a Staffordshire deputation a powerful indictment of the Parliamentary combination which, he claimed, treated Ireland worse than Russia treated Poland;² and on September 4th the aged but still vigorous ex-Premier in another resounding speech at Wrexham, urged that even King "Bomba" of infamous memory had not, as a rule, treated political prisoners as badly as did the British Government of 1887-8.³

On September 17th the opening of the Parnell Commission attracted still further attention to Irish issues,⁴ the more so as Parnell's Counsel, Russell and Asquith,⁵ began with marked confidence. First, they successfully claimed the right to inspect the suspect letters in possession of *The Times*; then their application for a general "order of discovery" of all relevant documents in possession of *The Times* was granted; and, finally, *The Times* was ordered to alter its line of action and to set down specific charges against the specific individuals it had incriminated. Though *The Times* was granted till October 22nd for this preliminary work, it was already plain that a remarkable triumph for Parnell and Gladstone was possible with very dangerous consequences for the Government. In these circumstances the concentration of "official" Liberal oratory upon Ireland during October was only natural. And when, on November 5th, Gladstone arrived in Birmingham for the annual meeting of the National Liberal Federation, the *Illustrated London News* reported that, both on that day and subsequently, his speaking was markedly concentrated upon Irish Home Rule. "He touched on other reforms," it admitted, "but that was the burden of his argument: Ireland: Ireland: always Ireland."⁶

¹ *Illustrated London News*, August 25th, whose correspondent seems to have been considerably impressed by the size of the meeting in Lord Ripon's grounds at Nocton Park, near Lincoln, and also by Morley's "incisive" oratory.

² *Ibid.* This paper, which was no party organ, ranked the speech as "one of the most effective political addresses Mr. Gladstone has ever delivered". It was extensively reproduced in pamphlet form.

³ *The Treatment of the Irish Members and the Irish Political Prisoners*, the Liberal party pamphlet reproducing Mr. Gladstone's speech of August 20th, gave also the most important parts of the Wrexham speech of September 4th.

⁴ The *Illustrated London News* of September 22nd, for instance, devoted its front page to portrait sketches of the leading figures in Court, including Parnell.

⁵ Asquith had already made his mark among the younger Gladstonian M.P.s and if he was Junior Counsel to Sir Charles Russell, the Gladstonian ex-Attorney-General, the employment none the less gave him marked opportunities. For example, he was able to help Russell conspicuously in the plea which secured the general "order of discovery" despite a certain reluctance on the part of the Bench.

⁶ *Ibid.*, November 10th.

This concentration of Opposition interest and hope on Irish issues hardly suited those "advanced" elements who had dreamed of using the fierce Opposition desire for power to push not merely Radical but even "Socialist" planks into the Liberal platform. Encouraged by the marked Trades effervescence heralding the approach of the "New Unionism"¹ to the Radical Clubs and beyond, one "advanced" political strategist attempted no less a manoeuvre than to frighten the main body of the Liberal party into the widest concessions. The great victory Liberals were now expecting at the next General Election would, he claimed, be dangerously jeopardised, especially in London,² unless the Birmingham Conference of the National Liberal Federation adopted a much more "advanced" programme, political and social, than had been thought sufficient at the Nottingham Conference of 1887. In August 1888, the strategist referred to, the young and Fabian Mr. Webb, circulated privately among Liberal politicians a pamphlet entitled *Wanted a Programme: An Appeal to the Liberal Party*.³ It is revealing enough of certain aspects of constituency politics to merit extensive quotation in a chapter hitherto so occupied as this has been with the mere surface of "national business".

Webb opened by stressing the contempt of the "masses" of London's working classes for official Liberalism and the complete "failure of the Caucus" to recapture the allegiance of the strong electoral forces represented by the 300 political working-men's clubs.

"In most of these clubs," he reported, "including all the most influential, the name of Liberal would be scornfully repudiated, and last year's 'Nottingham Programme' was universally received among them with mingled indifference and derision. The union of the leading clubs into the Metropolitan Radical Federation and their unanimous refusal to join the London Liberal and Radical Union further emphasises this divergence. . . . The general tone of mind and bias of character of the London wage-earner is emphatically Radical. Nevertheless it is by

¹ The Webbs, who were in a special position to know, ascribed peculiar importance to the victorious strike of the Bryant and May match-girls in July 1888. (*History of Trade Unionism*, ed. 1898, p. 388.)

² "Home Rule may sweep the provinces, but will it secure even a bare moiety of the metropolitan constituencies. . . ? The crushing collapse of 1886 may, however, perhaps, not be repeated, thanks largely to the accidental factor of 'Trafalgar Square', but he would at any rate be a sanguine, and probably an ill-informed critic who should venture to prophesy an appreciable improvement in the 1885 figures. . . . But even in 1885 London Liberal members were in a minority of 11. . . ."

³ Consulted in the Howell Collection of the papers of George Howell, at this time "Labour" M.P. for N.E. Bethnal Green.

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no means uncommon for them to vote by hundreds for the Conservative candidate, partly from sheer disgust at the weakness of Liberalism, partly no doubt because of specious 'Tory Democratic' promises, but mainly for personal or accidental reasons. . . . Their usual attitude, however, is abstention; first from registration; then, if registered, perforce, from the polling-booth. Practically none of them give any assistance in ordinary times to the necessary work of a Liberal Association. Even such of them as can be induced at the election to vote for the Liberal candidate, are in the party but not of it. There is an almost universal conviction among them that its aims are not theirs, and that its representatives are not those whom they would have chosen."

Having taken the argument to this point, Webb insisted that if "middle-class politicians" wanted the Liberal party to become the "party of the masses" (who, deprived of their votes, though they might be, by every possible registration technicality, still numbered over two-thirds of the electorate) they would have to offer a very different programme from that adopted at Nottingham.¹ Such a programme for adoption by the Birmingham meeting of the National Liberal Federation Webb claimed to find in the *Star*, the popular new organ of the capital's Radicalism.² It is worth giving *in extenso*, not merely as representing what those who claimed to speak for the "people" regarded as its cherished aims but also as indicating "practical" means for their "gradual" and unoppressive realisation. Here is the Programme advocated:³

REVISION OF TAXATION

OBJECT. The complete shifting of the burden from the workers of whatever grade to the recipients of rent and interest with a view to the ultimate and gradual extinction of the latter class.

MEANS. (1) The abolition of all customs and excise duties except those on spirits.

(2) Increase of the income tax, differentiating in favour of earned as against unearned incomes and graduating cumulatively by a system of successive levels of abatement.

¹ Of this programme Webb wrote: "Besides Irish Home Rule the political urgency of which is, of course, paramount, the official programme contained Registration Reform, Abolition of Entail and Primogeniture, Disestablishment of the Scotch Church, Local Government Reform and *nothing else*. This is apparently what the Liberal party offers to the dock labourer, to the 'sweated' trouser-hand, to 'Outcast London'. No wonder that the workers abstain from joining a party which, professing to deal with the interests of the masses, knows of nothing required but trivial improvements in legal and administrative machinery."

² Founded by T. P. O'Connor, M.P., in 1888, as a halfpenny evening paper and quickly acquiring a strong position in London.

³ *Star*, August 8th. It is of course not impossible that the rising Fabian strategist had a hand in securing its insertion.

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- (3) Equalisation and increase of death duties and use of the proceeds as capital not income.
- (4) Shifting of local rates and house duty from the occupier to the owner, any contract to the contrary notwithstanding.
- (5) Compulsory redemption of existing land-tax and re-imposition on all ground rents and increased values.
- (6) Abolition of fees on licences for employment.
- (7) Abolition of police-court fees.

EXTENSION OF THE FACTORY ACTS

OBJECT. To raise, universally, the standard of comfort by obtaining the general recognition of a minimum wage and a maximum day.

- MEANS. (1) Extension of the general provisions of the Factories and Workshops Acts (or the Mine Regulation Acts as the case may be) to all employers of labour.
- (2) Compulsory registration of all employers of more than three workers.
 - (3) Largely increased number of inspectors, and these to include women and to be mainly chosen from the wage-earning class.
 - (4) Immediate reduction of the maximum hours to 8 per day in all Government and municipal employment, in all mines, and in all licensed monopolies such as railways, tramways, gasworks, waterworks, docks, harbours, etc.: and in any trade in which a majority of the workers desire it.
 - (5) The compulsory insertion of clauses in all contracts for Government or municipal supplies providing that (*a*) there shall be no sub-contracting, (*b*) that no workers shall be employed more than 8 hours per day, and (*c*) that no wages less than a prescribed minimum shall be paid.

EDUCATIONAL REFORM

OBJECT. To enable all, even the poorest children, to obtain not merely some, but the best education they are capable of.

- MEANS. (1) The immediate abolition of all fees in public elementary schools, Board or voluntary, with a corresponding increase in the Government grant.
- (2) Creation of a Minister of Education with control over the whole educational system from the elementary school to the University and over all educational endowments.
 - (3) Provision of public technical and secondary schools wherever needed and the creation of abundant public secondary scholarships.
 - (4) Continuation, in all cases, of elementary education at evening school.
 - (5) Registration and inspection of all private educational establishments.

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REORGANISATION OF POOR LAW ADMINISTRATION

OBJECT. To provide generously and without stigma for the aged, the sick, and those destitute through temporary want of employment, without relaxing the "tests" against the endowment of able-bodied idleness.

MEANS. (1) The separation of the relief of the aged and the sick from the workhouse system by a universal system of aged pensions and public infirmaries.
(2) Industrial organisation and technical education of all able-bodied paupers.
(3) Provision of temporary relief work for the unemployed.
(4) The supervision of the Boards of Guardians by the local municipal authorities.

EXTENSION OF MUNICIPAL ACTIVITY

OBJECT. The gradual public organisation of labour for all public purposes and the elimination of the private capitalist and middleman,

MEANS. (1) The provision of increased facilities for the acquisition of land, the destruction without compensation of all dwellings found unfit for habitation and the provision of artisan dwellings by the municipality.
(2) The facilitation of every extension of municipal administration in London, and all other towns of gas, water, markets, tramways, hospitals, cemeteries, parks, museums, art galleries, libraries, reading-rooms, schools, docks, harbours, rivers, etc.
(3) The provision of abundant facilities for the acquisition of land by local rural authorities, for allotments, common pastures, public halls, reading-rooms, etc.

AMENDMENT OF POLITICAL MACHINERY

OBJECT. To obtain the most accurate representation and expression of the desires of the majority of the people at every moment.

MEANS. (1) Reform of Registration so as to give a vote, both Parliamentary and municipal to every adult.
(2) Abolition of any period of residence as a qualification for registration.
(3) Biennial Registration by a special public officer.
(4) Annual Parliaments.
(5) Payment of election expenses, including postage of election addresses and polling cards.
(6) Payment of all public representatives, parliamentary, county or municipal.
(7) Second Ballot.
(8) Abolition or painless extinction of the House of Lords.

Of course, Webb could hardly have believed seriously in the likelihood that the Birmingham meeting of the National Liberal Federation would accept anything like the programme he had outlined. But, in point of fact, the Birmingham meeting did bring some advances in Radicalism above that of Nottingham and, thanks to growing "Labour" pressure, the Manchester Federation meeting of 1889 was to witness almost sensational further advances.¹ For this the way was prepared by that very need for winning the hearty allegiance of London working men on which Webb had been relying. Here, for example, is a description of John Morley speaking at Clerkenwell, one of the strongholds of metropolitan Radicalism, on December 12, 1888, and turning from Sudanese, Indian and Irish points against the Government to pronounce what soon came to be called the "Clerkenwell Programme"²—a programme virtually accepted by Gladstone when speaking three days later at the Limehouse Town Hall:³

Passing somewhat abruptly to metropolitan affairs, Mr. Morley then enumerated the reforms which the Liberal party were ready to undertake when returned to office. At Birmingham the Liberals had pledged themselves to free schools, and its leaders had not only adopted that decision, but they were willing that the great London endowments should be utilised for the benefit of London as a whole. They had also decided that the owners of all interests in land should contribute a fair share to local taxation: and as a first step in this direction he urged that ground rents and values should be made liable. Of the 50 millions spent by the Metropolitan Board of Works during its existence of thirty-five years . . . the burden had fallen on the occupiers and not upon the ground landlords and those whose property had been improved by this enormous outlay. Mr. Morley further declared in favour of giving the people of London the control of their own police, as was the case in Manchester and Birmingham, urging that the present system was wasteful, onerous and unsatisfactory. He then passed on to denounce the leasehold system upon which the greatest part of London was built . . . as preventing thrift among the working classes, damaging to co-operative and building societies whilst it encouraged jerry-building and insufficient maintenance. . . . In order to effect these reforms speedily, Mr. Morley declared that improved political machinery was necessary. He would do away with the existing system of registration which made the franchise a mockery, and substitute one register for all purposes, shorter residence and more frequent revisions. Further, he declared his adoption of the "one man, one vote" principle, and demanded shorter parliaments.

¹ Cf. the *Annual Register* for 1889. See also *infra*, Chapter 5.

² *Annual Register*, 1888, English History, pp. 229-30. ³ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER IV

MR. PARNELL'S DAY OF TRIUMPH, 1889

"February 26th. The news of the flight of Pigott, which burst through the Probate Court into the crowded Strand this morning, rapidly spread over the Metropolis. By eleven o'clock it was known in the clubs, and very shortly afterwards the evening papers came out with specially early editions. In the lobbies and in the Chamber itself the House of Commons is literally buzzing with the news. Never in the history of a nation not without moving annals has there been so dramatic an episode. If the whole procedure of the Commission had been arranged with a view to this climax it could not have been more skilfully done. There were the long weeks and months of monotonous serving-up of ancient history. It is easy enough now to understand the coyness with which the Attorney-General approached the consideration of the letters. Every day spent in trotting out policemen and emergency men to describe the state of Kerry or Galway was twenty-four hours' further postponement of the catastrophe."

H. W. LUCY, *A Diary of the Salisbury Parliament, 1886-1892.*

"The Royal Family had large, he might say enormous incomes: but so had other men, and the broad difference between the Royal Family and the other men of gigantic wealth in this country was mainly this—that the wealth of the Royal Family was in a large measure associated with and even tied down to the discharge of public duties, whereas the wealthy men of the country were under practically no responsibility save the responsibility to their own consciences, and he avowed he thought it hard, not that these contrasts (between Royal riches and the poverty of the masses) should be drawn—in their own minds and consciences they could not draw them too stringently—but that they should be drawn for the purpose of turning the whole public feeling on the subject against grants to any member of the Royal Family (Cheers). He did not suppose that members of Royal Families were patterns of Christian economy, but how many of them were there whose expenditure would bear the microscopic examination they were now invited to apply, and to apply exclusively to Royalties?"

Mr. Gladstone invites his more Radical followers to accept his Royal Grants compromise, July 25th (*Northern Echo's Commons Report.*)

"The social distinctions between the people of the United Kingdom are already too great. Many of us deplore that they should exist, and are doing the best to bridge them over, but you, by your legislation, or your proposed legislation, appear determined to bring into more powerful relief the difference between rich and poor. The question of Royal Grants was sleeping; but you have aroused it in the minds of hundreds of thousands of men and women in this country, who have to toil hard for their 15s., 20s., or 30s. a week. These people are now asking if it is right that in a country boasting of its Christian civilisation one family should have nearly a million of money a year to divide amongst them, whilst other families should have to toil for 15s. a week, and others should starve. It is idle to forget these things. They are broad facts that stare us in the face, and which are daily driving the people more and more into the ranks of the Republican party. . . . There is almost universal opposition to these grants on the part of the working classes."

W. R. Cremer ("Labour" M.P. for Haggerston) in the Commons, July 26th.

"I say that the sum taken by the Queen is reasonable and moderate. We are told that the people—the people with a capital P—think it exorbitant. We are told this by the hon. Members who profess on all occasions to speak for the people with a capital P—the hon. members for Northampton, Leicester, Sunderland, who never speak to us on any popular question without giving us to understand that in some special sense they have a mission to represent the people. Sir, I deny their claims. I should like to see their credentials. They represent only a majority, and in some cases it is a very small majority, in the constituencies which severally return them to the House. Yes, they represent something else; they represent the superficial popular prejudices to which they truckle. These hon. Members tell us it is a shameful thing to fawn upon a Monarch. So it is: but it is a much more shameful thing to truckle to a multitude. There is not one of these hon. Members who dares to tell the whole truth upon the matter to their people . . . their object in their endeavours is to belittle the Monarchy, to make it unpopular, and to prepare the way for its destruction. We shall see whether the people, of whom we hear so much . . . whether the people will be willing, when they understand everything, to enter upon a contest which must be prolonged, which must be exasperating, to throw the Constitution into the melting-pot; to postpone altogether indefinitely all hope of practical and internal reform in order to accept the programme of those who call themselves new Radicals—new because they have nothing in common with the old Radicals,

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who are destructive in their aims and objects, who have never shown the slightest constructive capacity, who are, in short, nothing more nor less than the Nihilists of English Politics."

Joseph Chamberlain bitterly attacks the leaders of the 130 or so "advanced" members opposing "new" Royal Grants, July 29th.

WHEN Parliament reassembled on November 6, 1888, the principal business needing to be completed was that in Committee of Supply on the Estimates. There were some awkward moments for Ministers not only on the Irish Estimates—this might have been expected—but also on the Judicial Estimates, thanks to something that looked like abuse of patronage by Lord Chancellor Halsbury.¹ Goschen, too, had made a good deal of trouble for the Government both by the unfortunate Wheel and Van Tax he had suggested and by his obstinate reluctance to announce its withdrawal until November 29th. The handsome emoluments in return for which the Attorney-General bestowed upon public business such attention as he did not give to *The Times* and other private clients, naturally became another theme for critics of the Government.

But Ministers hoped that the “liberal” Irish Land Purchase Bill, which they had prepared for passage during the short reassembly of Parliament, would be of some counter-avail. To the Opposition, however, the Tory offer to make yet another five millions available for Irish Land Purchase, in addition to the five millions of the Ashbourne Act of 1885, seemed very like an attempt to drug England into forgetting the Coercion Act. Moreover, there was an excellent case for holding that the hardest-hit among the Irish peasantry would gain far more from a Bill empowering the Land Court to cancel or reduce arrears of rent than from one providing new purchase-funds which they could never, in their existing indebtedness, hope to draw on. Certainly, the Opposition thought it worth while to divide against the Government three times in order to press a Rent Arrears plan. And Divisions of 246–330, 224–299 and 148–182 show, at least, that the Gladstonian Front Bench was keeping the entire forces of Radicalism and Parnellism behind it.

Yet when the long Session, begun on February 9th, was finally ended by prorogation on December 24, 1888, the Opposition, for all the trouble it had given the Government on matters ranging

¹ *Punch*, November 24th, summarised the critics thus: “Appears, according to witnesses testifying upon their Parliamentary Oath, that Lord Chancellor sort of farms out offices of State, first providing for those of his own family, and next for his family’s friends. . . . At very moment, as it happened, Lord High Jobber on his feet in Lords, perched on highest pedestal of loftiest morality, protesting against the Oaths Bill.”

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from Suakim¹ to Tralee, still seemed to have no nearer prospect of power than that afforded by a General Election which Ministers might conceivably stave off until 1893. The great Birmingham enthusiasm excited in November by Gladstone's arrival for the National Liberal Federation's confident proceedings, the very successful rallies of London Radicalism at Clerkenwell and Limehouse, in December, were all very well. But they could neither dissolve the "Coalition" majority nor drive Ministers to resignation. The one matter prominently before the public which might conceivably yield disclosures mortal to the Government was the Parnell Commission's inquiry. But thanks, partly, to the extensive terms of reference deliberately chosen for the Commission by the Government and, partly, to the defence-tactics chosen for *The Times* by the Attorney-General, the possibility of isolating and bringing into high relief the single issue of whether *The Times*, first, and the Conservative party, afterwards, had profited from the use of forged letters against Parnell seemed to be fast vanishing.

Here is Morley's picture of the Parnell Inquiry at its dullest and, to Parnell and the Opposition, its most irritating stage:²

Witnesses were produced, in a series that seemed interminable, to tell the story of five-and-twenty outrages in Mayo, of sixty-five in Kerry, one after another, and all with immeasurable detail. Some of the witnesses spoke no English and the English of others was hardly more intelligible than Erse. Long extracts were read out from four hundred and forty speeches. . . . In truth it was designed for the public outside the Court, and not a touch was spared that might deepen the odium. Week after week the ugly tale went on—a squalid ogre let loose among a population demoralised by ages of wicked neglect, misery and oppression. One side strove to show that the ogre had been wantonly raised by the Land League . . . the other, that it was the progeny of distress and wrong, that the League had rather controlled than kindled its ferocity. . . .

Yet for all the discouraging surface presented to the Opposition by Commission proceedings tending to take a shape confirming the casual newspaper-reader in anti-Parnell prejudices, those behind the scenes knew that the critical inquiry into the provenance of the alleged Parnell letters could not be indefinitely delayed. Indeed, after the Land League's ex-Treasurer had warned Parnell's

¹ Whenever the desultory warfare, conducted against the Mahdi from Suakim, showed signs of reinvigoration there were the inevitable Radical protests concerning its expense and futility.

² Morley's *Gladstone* (ed. 1908), ii, 483.

lawyers against suspecting Captain O'Shea of the forgery merely because the Captain had given evidence useful to *The Times*,¹ he had supplied, from America, further material which made it virtually certain that the forger had been Richard Pigott, a shabby ex-Fenian journalist who had sought money from all political quarters.² Finding that the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union and *The Times* were eager for matter to incriminate Parnell and his party, Pigott had obligingly produced and sold it to purchasers who had been far too ready to accept it without adequate tests.

But to know that Pigott was the forger was a very different thing from convicting him of it and disposing of his story that he had been deceived into buying the letters himself. The Radical Labouchere busied himself, therefore, with private attempts to get a complete confession from Pigott, while that worthy, well aware that Parnell's lawyers held strong material against him, played alternately with the notions of selling *The Times* to Labouchere and Labouchere to *The Times*.³ But as the whole reputation of *The Times* was at stake, it had perforce to spend money freely and Labouchere was sold to *The Times*. In other circumstances, the entire issue might have been decided when counsel for *The Times* placed, before the Commission, offers which, according to Pigott, involved Labouchere, Parnell, and Parnell's solicitor in promises to pay him £1,000 if he would confess the letters to be forgeries.⁴

Fortunately for the cause of justice, the famous appearance of Pigott before the Parnell Commission, on February 21 and 22, 1889, resulted in something more than his romancing account of how he had obtained the Parnell letters and negotiated with

¹ The *Illustrated London News* of November 10th still gave the greatest prominence to O'Shea's important evidence of October 31st, evidence in which O'Shea might be held to have done considerable harm to the Opposition as well as to Parnell, revealing, as he did, some of the atmosphere of the "Kilmainham Treaty" negotiations of 1882, besides expressing the opinion that the Parnell signature on the letter, reproduced in *The Times* of April 18, 1887, was genuine. There are strong hints in the *Punch* of November 10th that Fleet Street ascribed O'Shea's changed attitude to Parnell's relations with Mrs. O'Shea, relations which must now have been widely suspected.

² Cf. A. Thorold, *Henry Labouchere*, p. 282, for his Fenian days when he "had swindled every Fenian fund he could milk" and had certainly managed to sell Parnell three struggling weekly newspapers. He had later tried to "milk" Government funds and had ended by offering the "revelations" of an ex-Fenian to the Conservative Press, a trade he varied with the sale of indecent literature and pictures from Paris.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 342, 345, 349.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 350-3. See also the newspaper reports of the Parnell Commission proceedings of February 21, 1889 (Fifty-fourth day).

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Labouchere. A most masterly cross-examination by Parnell's Counsel, Sir Charles Russell, the Gladstonian ex-Attorney-General, so completely unmasked the man as to drive him to the resolution of escaping to the Continent before he was arrested. And, oddly enough, appreciation of Labouchere's comprehending attitude towards his miserable problems induced Pigott, before commencing a flight soon ended by suicide, to leave a complete and irrefutable confession with the Radical politician.¹

If Pigott's confession did not end the Parnell Commission, it certainly caused an astonishing revulsion of feeling throughout Great Britain.² Till it had come, Parnell and Parnellites were widely suspected of maintaining underground links with "outrage" and "crime". Accordingly, in January 1889, such things were still being recorded as the six months' hard labour sentence inflicted on E. Harrington, M.P., the four months' sentence inflicted on Mr. Finucane, M.P., for "intimidation of tenants", and the arrest at Manchester of Mr. W. O'Brien, M.P., to serve a new sentence inflicted upon him in Ireland during his absence.³ Then, on February 2nd, yet another Irish M.P., Mr. Cox, was given a four months' sentence; on February 3rd Father M'Fadden was arrested at Gweedore despite a savage riot and the death of a police-inspector; on February 5th Parnell's Scottish action against *The Times* was dismissed from the Edinburgh Courts; and on February 8th Mr. Kilbride, M.P., was sentenced to three months' imprisonment for conspiracy.⁴ But after the Pigott confession it appeared, for a short time, possible that the enforcement of the Crimes Act might have to be modified or even altogether abandoned. Opposition criticism of Coercion, led by Morley, Gladstone and Asquith, had never before been so pungent and confident as during the 1889 Debate on the Address, nor had the Government Benches ever before been so depressed and dumbfounded.⁵

¹ *Illustrated London News*, March 2, 1889.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, March 9th, for a description of the scene in the Commons when Parnell rose to speak on March 1st (Pigott's confession had been made public on February 27th): "The rising of Mr. Parnell, the pale, slender, and aristocratic-looking leader of the Irish Home Rulers, was the signal for one of the most enthusiastic demonstrations the House has ever witnessed. . . ."

³ *British Almanac and Companion*, 1890, p. 281. Mr. Sheehy, M.P., was another sufferer. On January 21st he was arrested in Glasgow on an Irish warrant.

⁴ *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1890, p. 344; *British Almanac and Companion*, 1890, p. 282.

⁵ Cf. *Punch*, March 9th, for Toby M.P. and his view of Morley's "hard-hitting, slashing" opening speech as the best he had yet delivered in Parliament. In *A Diary of the Salisbury Parliament, 1886-1892*, Toby, writing in his proper

Even the announcement on March 7th of a great new naval programme to add seventy ships to the Royal Navy at a cost of twenty-one millions, hardly changed the prevalent political atmosphere. Eventually the alarmists persuaded "public opinion" to look with satisfaction upon this "energetic defensive" measure with its implied warning to France and Russia that Britain meant to keep her position of overwhelming naval superiority.¹ But, for the time, even exaggerated naval alarms failed to divert public attention, for more than the briefest space, from the absorbing possibilities of the Irish situation. Here is one well-placed diarist writing of the Government's position on March 22nd, after the Estimates business had produced more trouble for Ministers, both on the Attorney-General's record and on the alleged assistance given to *The Times's* case by the Irish Secretary and his Police and Prisons Department:²

The deadlock is peculiarly painful to Ministers. If it came about through ordinary accident or by deliberate obstruction they might find some means of consolation. But they know too well—the fact is absolutely beyond dispute—that the whole affair is due to their own action. Their curses of Mr. Parnell and his colleagues in the representation of Ireland have come home to roost. That fateful Commission of Judges they insisted on appointing, in the sure and certain hope that it would prove the destruction of Mr. Parnell, and with him of Mr. Gladstone, Home Rule, and the Liberal Opposition, looms darkly over the Chamber. Every day as the question hour comes round the Chief Secretary and the Home Secretary are set up against the wall and pelted with questions as to their connection with *The Times* and its various agents, from Mr. Pigott to Mr. Soames, from Mr. Houston to the Attorney-General.

Poor Mr. Smith (Leader of the House) is terribly worried. There is talk about his throwing up the sponge. . . . Not a very strong man himself—his strength, indeed, such as it is, lies in his weakness and in the friendly patronage with which he is therefore shielded from both sides of the House—he is not assisted by his colleagues. Mr. Balfour, infinitely the strongest, is just now tainted with the breath of the departed Pigott. Mr. Goschen, from whom so much was expected, is rather a

name of H. W. Lucy, commented again on the tremendous "cheering" amid which Gladstone ended his extremely able speech on March 1st, and how Asquith rising as late as 10.15 that night made a speech which refilled the House and gave it "the eager, restless, almost tumultuous appearance which marks it only two or three times a Session".

¹ *Hansard*, April 4th, for the vote of 215-128 by which the Resolution to undertake the expenditure was carried. There was, of course, some Radical and Irish opposition.

² H. W. Lucy, *A Diary of the Salisbury Parliament, 1886-1892*, pp. 172-3.

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source of weakness than of strength. . . . He is listened to with dislike by the party he has deserted, and without respect by the party he has joined.

The position was, in fact, especially encouraging for the Radicals, and it was they who were most conspicuously active during the remainder of the Session. Indeed a formal Radical organisation was set up, credited with the command of some seventy "extreme Radical" votes and taking as its mission the pushing-on of Radical projects regardless of the prim hesitations of the Gladstonian Front Bench.¹ The special chance of the "extreme men" did not come until the discussions of July on Queen Victoria's request for Parliamentary grants to two of her grandchildren. But, even before then, a Leasehold Enfranchisement Division of 157-186 on May 1st; a Division of 126-317, no May 10th, for the abolition of University Representation; the raising, on May 14th, of 231 votes against 284 for Disestablishment in Wales; the approval given on May 16th by 205 members (against 264) to Bradlaugh's condemnation of the over-generous terms of commutation allowed for the extinction of the hereditary Pensions of the past;² and, finally, the support lent by 160 members

¹ H. W. Lucy, *A Diary of the Salisbury Parliament, 1886-1892*, p. 215. Labouchere was Chairman and Jacoby and Philip Stanhope were Whips.

² Feeling against the Pension List, one of the causes that had nourished Radicalism in the past, was still strong despite the efforts that had been made to push its scandals out of the way by Treasury offers to buy out the beneficiaries of the Perpetual and Hereditary Pensions, so freely created in the past in order to allow ennobled military and naval officers "to support peerages". But there were other complaints against the Pension List than, say, the "Perpetual Pension" of £5,000 per annum paid to the descendant of Nelson's nephew (!) or the £2,000 each per annum paid to the fortunate possessors of the Rodney and Exmouth peerages. Some of the recipients of "pensions for political and civil services" hardly seemed destitute, and pensions for judicial services at £3,500 per annum each were scanned with none too friendly eyes in the Radical Clubs. Bradlaugh had, in fact, been allowed a Select Committee in 1887 to consider these and cognate subjects, had obtained as strong a report as he could have hoped for from a Committee representing all sections of the Commons, and was now trying to pledge the Government to hold itself bound by the Report. Here are some quotations from it: "That pensions, allowances and payments ought not in future to be granted in perpetuity. That offices with salaries and without duties, or merely nominal duties, ought to be abolished. That all existing perpetual pensions, allowances and payments, and all hereditary offices, should be determined and abolished. That in all such commutations the Lords of the Treasury should take into consideration . . . whether or not any real service had been rendered by the original grantee, or was now performed by the actual holder of the office. . . . That the rate of commutation usually adopted of about twenty-seven years' purchase is too high. That since January 1, 1881, three hundred and thirty pensions, payments and allowances, amounting in all to the annual sum of £18,957 9s. 6d. have been commuted by the payment of £527,983 18s. 4d. That some of these pensions appear to have been commuted, . . . without sufficient inquiry."

(against 201) to Labouchere's motion of May 17th, for the abolition of an hereditary Chamber—all these varied and ambitious activities indicate a Parliamentary Radicalism which was vigilant, confident and assured of the widest support out-of-doors.

But the most absorbing part of the Session, as far as "extreme men" were concerned, came in July. On July 2nd Mr. Smith, Leader of the House, brought in Royal Messages inviting Parliamentary provision for two of the Queen's grandchildren, Prince Albert Victor, the Prince of Wales's first-born, now twenty-five years old, and the Princess Louise, Prince Albert's sister, who, at twenty-two, was about to contract a marriage with Lord Fife. Even Whigs had been prophesying for some time that Queen Victoria's views on the national duty to "provide" for Royal grandchildren as well as for Royal children would sooner or later cause serious trouble. And it is understandable that Radicals, who had been vainly demanding an inquiry into the real income and expenditure of the Crown for nearly twenty years and protesting loudly against every successive vote to Victoria's sons, daughters and daughters-in-law till reliable information was given, were determined to thwart plans which they considered doubly ungenerous, in view of the enormous wealth that rumour, not without cause, assigned to the Queen.¹

When, therefore, on July 4th, the Government proposed, and Gladstone seconded, the setting up of a Committee to take the Royal Messages into consideration, Bradlaugh² promptly moved an amendment to the effect that the Committee should also take into account the Civil List or, in other words, what Radicals held to be the enormous resources already placed by Parliament at the disposal of the Crown for the support of the Royal Family. The climax of this stage of the debate came when Mr. Samuel Storey, the Radical member for Sunderland, won stormy applause from the Radical and Irish Benches for an outspoken speech declaring, among other things, that a nobleman in the position of

¹ Cf. *What does she do with it?*, the remarkable and widely circulated pamphlet of 1871, which exaggeratedly suggested that even at that date the Queen's private fortune, representing the principal and accumulated interest of her "savings" from the Civil List and other Royal incomes, might exceed ten millions sterling. Sir Charles Dilke on the *Cost of the Crown*, another widely circulated pamphlet of 1871 whose influence was long felt, showed how much more than the £385,000 per annum of the Civil List "Royalty" cost the nation.

² Himself the author of that damaging attack on "Royalty", *The Impeachment of the House of Brunswick*.

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Lord Fife, and with his enormous resources,¹ should "resent the notion of coming to the nation for a grant of this kind". If Bradlaugh's amendment was defeated, by 125 votes against 313, the mere fact that 125 votes had been cast against both Front Benches combined was hardly a cheerful omen for Ministers. They must already have been committed to terms with the Queen, virtually based on her contentions that the entire income of the Crown Lands could, if necessary, be claimed for the Royal Family and ignoring the Radical counter-contention that, historically, this income had once been looked to not merely to support the Royal Household but to furnish the main resource of peace-time Government.²

Radical determination to make an outright challenge became even plainer on July 9th, when the personnel of the Committee of twenty-three to consider the Royal Messages was being decided upon. Dissatisfied with a representation on the Committee confined to Labouchere and Burt when the Radical malcontents' numbers certainly entitled them to three and possibly even to four places, Storey moved the adjournment. When this was heavily defeated by the combined efforts of the four party leaderships which had drawn up the Committee list, Conservative, Gladstonian, Liberal-Unionist and Parnellite (Parnell was now undergoing a Gladstonian grooming into the "respectability" judged necessary to win a majority for Home Rule at the next Election), that veteran Radical, Dillwyn, M.P. for Swansea, moved the inclusion of Mr. Storey and Dr. Hunter in the Committee. Heavily defeated once more, the Radicals, conscious that out-of-doors their views would bring them wide popularity with the "working man", tried again and again. Thus, Storey challenged

¹ Barker and Daughish, *Historical and Political Handbook*, 1886, p. 124, gives the Earl of Fife as owning 135,829 acres in Aberdeenshire, 72,432 in Banff, and 40,959 in Elgin.

² See Bradlaugh, *Impeachment of the House of Brunswick* (9th ed., 1883), p. 97, for the even stronger contention that after the Revolution of 1688 the hereditary claim to the Crown Lands had been lost and that William III, Anne and the first two Georges had been merely allowed life claims by Parliament. "There is a mere grant for life, determining with William's death. On this death everything granted reverted to the nation, just as leasehold property, on the termination of a lease for life, reverts to the lessor. On the accession of Queen Anne, March 8, 1702, we have the second Civil List Statute—1st Anne, Statute 1. In this there is again a grant to the Queen for life, but not the faintest suggestion that Anne had surrendered anything, or indeed that she had anything to surrender. In 1760 we find a change in words. . . . The wording . . . was vague, but it has served its purpose (of helping the Royal Family's claims) and has been textually repeated in the three succeeding Civil List Statutes."

Chamberlain's nomination in a particularly bitter speech—and, taken all in all, Parliament and the country were given reason to expect a struggle of absorbing interest, first in the Committee and then in the Commons after the Committee reported.¹ It was foreseen, for example, that, in the Committee, Gladstone and Parnell might repeatedly have to range themselves against the Government and with Burt and Labouchere.

In point of fact, the Ministerial proposals to the Committee were such as to cause Gladstone to raise immediate objection. Conservative Ministers, enjoying the Queen's fervid support, had hardly been in a position to tell her the brutal truth about the opinion of the "millions" on her request for Parliamentary grants to her grandchildren. Queen Victoria apparently held that she was doing her part when she allowed her Ministers to undertake that there would be no request for Grants for the children of her daughters since she herself would make "provision". It was plain, however, that she meant, if she could, to have Parliamentary "provision" for the families of her sons though, for the moment, only the children of the Prince of Wales were in question since it was only they who had reached or were approaching adult age. But for these children Ministers had undertaken to ask Grants that were bound to appear "outrageous" in Radical eyes. For Prince Albert Victor £10,000 a year was suggested with an additional £15,000 annually when he married; for Prince George £8,000 a year with an additional £7,000 per annum on marriage; and for the Princesses Louise, Victoria and Maud, £9,000 per annum each with dowries of £30,000.² Nor was any security originally offered against similar requests, on a smaller scale, being made in due course for the children of the Dukes of Edinburgh, Connaught and Albany.

In the Committee Gladstone soon made it obvious that he could be no party to Grants on the scale suggested by Ministers, who found it necessary to beat retreat after retreat if they were to be secure that the "Grand Old Man" would lend his unparalleled

¹ Even yet the critical and sometimes mocking attitude towards the idiosyncrasies of the Royal House, an attitude inherited from the eighteenth century, had not been ended despite constantly increasing floods of spoken and printed sycophancy. Indeed these floods only whetted the appetite for a change from the monotonous routine of official and semi-official laudation. Thus, on July 20, 1889, even *Punch* permitted itself verses and a Royal Grants cartoon that must have been far from pleasing to Royal eyes.

² *Illustrated London News*, July 27th, which criticises "the storm of claptrap oratory being manufactured".

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prestige to defending some manner of Royal Grant against his own "extremer" followers and the "scandalous" demonstrations they were preparing to excite in the country. Thus it was that Ministers after consenting virtually to abandon all idea of Grants, present or future, for the children of the Queen's younger sons¹ were driven to abandon also the idea of specific individual Grants to the five children of the Prince of Wales. It was made plain to them that there would be really formidable agitation, approved even by "responsible" Opposition leaders, against allowing new modern precedents to be created for the grant of incomes to any but adult children of a reigning sovereign. But Ministers had to beat still a last retreat even after Gladstone, with a nice sense of what his "extreme" followers would tolerate in him, allowed the Government to know that if their proposal took the form of giving further help to the Prince of Wales, now that his five children had grown up, he would give support despite strong objections from his own side. The Government thereupon suggested a Prince of Wales's Children Bill providing £40,000 per annum and, after requiring Ministers to reduce the sum to £36,000 per annum, Gladstone agreed to accept this as a settlement.

There was still destined to be a struggle, however, before the "settlement" reached by the Committee, with Labouchere and Burt dissenting, was carried through the Commons. One argument, for example, usable by the malcontents, was that the Civil List inquiry had been evaded and yet a very large Grant obtained.²

¹ Morley was dissatisfied with the merely implied abandonment of such grants by the Government and sought first in the Committee and afterwards in full House to make the "settlement" include a formal abandonment. Here is the *Northern Echo*, July 30th, on Morley's ultimate amendment: "Mr. Morley, who was received with loud cheers, said it was impossible to persuade the people of the country that while they had to provide for their own children, the great ones of the earth should not be compelled to do the same. . . . The Government was directly challenged in Committee by several members of the Committee whether they would not undertake that no future grants should be asked for the grandchildren of the Sovereign, except the children of the Prince of Wales, even if they only made the undertaking for the present reign. The demand was not answered. The position taken up by the Government could only mean, if it meant anything, that younger children of the Royal House, instead of melting away like the younger children of other great houses into the pursuits of other men, were to continue for almost indefinite generations, to carry titles that had for them no meaning, surround themselves with a state that was superfluous and spurious, adding no dignity to the Royal office . . . constituting an embarrassment to themselves and an embarrassment to the community."

² Cf. Thorold's *Labouchere*, p. 347 n., for the Draft Report that Labouchere suggested to the Committee where, of course, it only enjoyed his own support and Burt's. The concluding paragraph, giving succinct expression to Radical opinion, is worth quoting: "In conclusion, your Committee desires to record its

Moreover even if Gladstone had obtained some changes of form and amount, the bald fact remained that Royal grandchildren had been placed upon the Budget after all—and without any real security that, a modern precedent having been created, it would not be expanded at some favourable moment in the future. Accordingly when Mr. Smith, Leader of the House, brought in the Committee's Report on July 22nd, and suggested its being debated on the 24th, Labouchere and Bradlaugh, speaking for the large Radical group, demanded more time to study the Report and its implications, and had to be appeased by a postponement to the 25th. On the 25th and the 26th a debate, eagerly followed in the country, took place, and despite Gladstone's doing his best for the Government, and Parnell's insistence on the Irishmen turning "respectable" and helping the Government also, the

emphatic opinion, that the cost of the maintenance of the Royal Family is already so great, that under no circumstances should it be increased. In its opinion, a majority of Her Majesty's subjects regard the present cost of Royalty as excessive, and it deems it, therefore, most undesirable to prejudice any decisions that may be taken in regard to this cost, when the entire subject will come under the cognisance of Parliament, by granting either directly or indirectly, allowances or annuities to any of the grandchildren of the sovereign."

It may be mentioned that one set of Radical arguments concerned with the already "excessive" cost of Royalty, was directed to securing the abolition of many Court offices and "sinecures". Even Mr. Theodore Fry, M.P. for Darlington, and a representative of the most moderate Parliamentary section opposing "new" Royal grants gave his Women's Liberal Association (*Northern Echo*, July 31st) quite strong meat on the subject, though he claimed to be "strongly in favour of England maintaining her Court and her Royalty even in a state of splendour". The "great majority of the Liberal party", he declared, was convinced that the Royal Family already had enough, and convinced also that if additional grants had really been necessary "there were many costly sinecure offices attached to the Court, and they believed that many of them might be abolished and the amount of the salaries given to the Royal Family if need be. About £50,000 a year was spent on these offices. Men like the Duke of Buccleuch, who had a very large fortune, were paid a sum of money for a sinecure office in the House of Lords. There was a Lord Chamberlain who had £2,000 a year, a Vice-Chamberlain with nearly £1,000, eight Lords-in-Waiting with £5,600 amongst them, and eight Grooms-in-Waiting with £2,685. There was a First Lady of the Bedchamber and seven others to assist her (laughter) having amongst them nearly £4,000 a year. There were eight Maids of Honour with £2,400, eight Bedchamber women, a Corps of Gentlemen at Arms, a Lord Steward . . . a Master of the Household, a Master of the Horse, the Master of the Hounds, there were pages and equerries, and altogether the list was a very long one. Most of these office-holders did nothing for their salaries . . . as the Association knew, the Queen herself, and the Prince of Wales, had very large incomes indeed, and as Sir George Trevelyan stated in the House, we had really now to maintain two Courts instead of one. The English people would always maintain, he believed, at any rate one Court in great splendour, but we were now asked to support two, whilst there was the decided danger of having to maintain a number of toy Courts all over the country: and it was against this that the bulk of the Liberal Party protested. The people must be considered as well as the Royal Family (Applause)."

Mr. Parnell's Day of Triumph 1889

Radicals succeeded in dividing at 116 against 398.¹ The contest was renewed on July 29th, this time on an amendment from "Honest John" Morley, who despite his Privy Councillorship and his great admiration for Gladstone, could not accept his leader's reductions of the suggested Royal Grants as sufficient to salve a really Radical conscience. This time the Radicals divided at 134 against 355,² nor did this second defeat prevent the continuance, out-of-doors, of hostile comment upon the Royal Family.³

The Government's Royal Grants troubles of July were followed in August by Church troubles. The Church position in Wales was now serious and, according to Church quarters at least, numerous clergymen of the Established Church were in danger of starvation⁴ owing to the continuance of widespread tithe-refusal by Welsh Dissenters who demanded Welsh Disestablishment both on religious and national grounds.⁵ Tithe-distraints upon defaulters' produce had, of course, been attempted—occasionally on a considerable scale—but apart from the ruinous expense sometimes incurred and the dangerously bad blood provoked, bailiffs were growing ever more reluctant to face the hostile demonstrations of anti-tithe mobs, embittered at once by anti-Church

¹ Cf. *Punch*, August 3rd, for Toby M.P.: "Grand Old Man comes out as Grand Old Conservative. House, crowded from floor to topmost range of gallery, waits on his utterances. The proposed vote for the Royal Family has been attacked on his own side. Throws himself into breach." After quoting Gladstone's praise of Victoria as "the illustrious representative of the British Monarchy", he notes, "seemed for a moment as if Conservative party would rise to their feet, rush across the floor, and lift shoulder-high this stout Pillar of the State. Cheer after cheer burst forth. . . ."

² Despite a forcible intervention by Chamberlain, uproariously cheered by Conservatives and quoted above.

³ Cf. *Punch*, August 10th, for a skit upon the Indignation Meetings being held to protest against the Royal Grants: "Her Gracious Majesty the Queen is repeatedly described as 'this mis-rubble ole bein', an Archbishop is invariably mentioned as an 'Arch-rogue' while the orators and the audience appear from their remarks to be the only persons capable of worthily guiding this unhappy country's destinies."

⁴ Cf. *The National Church*, September 1889, for a July appeal to English clergymen from the Bishop of St. Asaph and others asking for "all the immediate pressure" possible to be brought to bear upon members of Parliament to secure the passing of the "Tithe Rent-charge Recovery Bill" this session. "Unless this Bill is passed," it continues, "simple starvation awaits a large number of the Welsh Clergy."

⁵ Cf. *Cambrian News*, March 29th: "the people of Wales have not, like the Irish, been cowed by seven centuries of oppression, and they are as determined they will not be dragooned into submission as they are resolved not to pay Tithes without protest. It is all very well for Conservatives to pretend to be shocked that Nonconformists will not pay Tithes willingly, and it may be good manners and excellent taste to call them thieves and vagabonds. . . . Perhaps policemen's batons are good enough for deluded men and women who think Tithes should be devoted to national purposes. . . ."

feeling and the agricultural depression.¹ Before their Royal Grants troubles, Ministers had apparently been considering the drafting of a very bold Bill.² Responsibility for tithe-payment throughout England and Wales was to be transferred from occupier to owner who would, of course, recoup himself from the higher rents obtainable from tithe-freed tenants and would be given, besides, valuable opportunities of liberating his land totally from tithe by a lump-sum payment.

But the Royal Grants troubles absorbed much Ministerial energy and time throughout July, and dragged on even into August. Landlords, moreover, showed an understandable dislike to being forced into the strife between their tenants and the Church and were hardly to be blamed if they feared that one result of attempting to collect the tithe in the rent might be to convert the tithe-war into a rent-war also.³ The Church was therefore finally asked to content itself with a Tithe Rent Charge Recovery Bill to give tithe-owners an alternative method of recovering tithe, seemlier, easier and cheaper to employ than the seizure of tithable articles "by the emergency men, bum bailiffs, dragoons and other cavalry", denounced by Welsh Radical members like Mr. T. E. Ellis. A tithe-owner, in short, was to be empowered to go to the County Court against a person in default with his tithe-payment, and the County Court was to have the power of treating the tithe-defaulter like any other debt-defaulter and ordering the seizure and sale even of his non-tithable personal property like furniture, household goods, and clothes.

At the Committee stage of the Bill, entered into on August 12th, it quickly became obvious that dangerous Liberal-Unionist and

¹ Cf. *The National Church*, June 1889, for scenes at Whitechurch, Pembrokeshire, after the rector, failing like his brother-incumbents "to obtain local assistance", called in a Mr. Stevens: "The officers of the law, whether in small or great numbers, have been confronted and surrounded by armed, excited, and infuriated mobs, and every effort has been made to paralyse the law by actual conflict, by impeding the progress, and barring the entry of its officers, and by removal of produce and stock." The *Cambrian News* declared that Welshmen, who had "laughed at the large displays of police force" protecting Mr. Stevens's distrains, awaited with interest Mr. Stevens's "appearance with soldiers and waggons to take away ricks of hay and corn" whose disposal at public sales was practically impossible.

² Cf. *The National Church*, August 1889: "It is well known that a larger Bill has been drafted and under consideration by the Cabinet, or a Committee of the Cabinet, but that owing to certain exigencies this has been postponed."

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, September 1889 (p. 263), for some Churchmen's fear that mishandling of the situation "may at no distant day open the door to a fresh and probably more disastrous agitation".

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Conservative objections existed as well as Radical. Thus there were Conservative "friends of agriculture" who, regarding the liability to tithe as a standing impediment to agricultural development, supported the demand that any Bill for increasing the tithe-owner's legal powers should be accompanied by a *quid pro quo*, possibly in the shape of a levy from the tithe-owner's receipts to form the gradually swelling capital of a Tithe Redemption Fund.¹ If this section, consciously or unconsciously, stood for the land-owner's interest even against the Church, another Conservative section, fearful of the continuance of tenant-resistance to tithe even if County Court distraints became available, pressed the Government to stand by its original resolution to protect the Church adequately, by imposing future tithe-liability upon the landlord with power to recoup himself through the rent.² On August 14th Ministers encouraged, perhaps, by "improvements" satisfactory to the Church, effected earlier in the Session, in the Intermediate Education (Wales) Bill,³ announced a change in their legislative plans. Their Tithe Bill would be altered so that tithe-responsibility might be shifted after all from occupier to owner, though with some consolatory concessions to the "landed interest".⁴ Harcourt, who was leading the Opposition Front Bench, seems to have detected very quickly that the Government's far-reaching amendments could not properly be forced into the framework of the original Bill but would require the drafting of a new one. And on August 16th he had the supreme satisfaction of hearing the Speaker accept his contention that the Government's new clauses could not possibly be deemed to have been covered by the Second Reading accorded to the original Bill, on July 18th, by a

¹ On March 26th the Council of the Associated Chambers of Agriculture had adopted the resolution: "That no measure relating to Tithe will afford a satisfactory settlement of the question which does not provide on a fair basis for a general redemption of the charge." *The National Church*, April 1889.

² *Ibid.*, September 1889.

³ This Bill, promoted by the Welsh Liberal members, became law in a very different form from what had been hoped. If secondary education in Wales (and Monmouthshire) would, with the consent of the Charity Commissioners, be able to tap old educational endowments, yet, as the *Liberator* pointed out, "certain rich charities of which they desired to have the benefit have been put beyond their reach, and no doubt in the interest of the Episcopal Church".

⁴ Thus the County Court had power to remit part or even the whole of the tithe charges in suitable cases and no County Court order was to be "enforced personally against the owner" or by the sale of lands or otherwise than by "the appointment of a receiver of the rents and profits". Naturally the landlord, in addition to the rent, became entitled to ask his tenant for the tithe paid on account of the land occupied by the tenant.

majority of 212 against 160.¹ There was no time for a new Bill in a Session whose prorogation was planned for August 30th. The Government, therefore, was compelled to go into Recess under the sting of a third humiliation, almost more vexatious than those connected with the Parnell Commission and the Royal Grants. It seemed to need no special powers of prophecy to predict a catastrophic defeat for Ministers at the next General Election.

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, August 14th and 16th.

CHAPTER V

THE GREAT DOCK STRIKE

"I am asked, What is the net result of the Strike? I can answer in a word. The strikers have gained 1*d.* per hour on ordinary time; 3*d.* per hour from 6 to 8 p.m.; 2*d.* per hour after 8; whilst the four hours' call for 2*s.* pay gives a permanency that has only now been secured. . . . By the abolition of contract the men cease to be sweated by the gangers. . . .

"As a Trade Unionist, my own notion of the practical outcome of the Strike is that all sections of labour must organise themselves into trades unions; that all trades must federate themselves, and that in the future, prompt and concerted action must take the place of the spasmodic and isolated action of the past.

"As a Socialist, I rejoice that organised labour has shown how fully it can meet the forces of Capitalism, and how small a chance the oppressor of labour has against the resolute combination of men who, having found their ideal, are determined to realise it."

John Burns in the *New Review*, October 1889.

"Mr. Morley . . . directed the attention of his hearers to the social problems of the day, which were pressing more and more upon men's minds, and threatened in the near future to disturb the contentment of capitalists. He denied that he was a Socialist, being satisfied with the name of Radical. Moreover if Socialism implied any denial of the principle of private property and the assumption and administration by the State of all land and capital, if it meant an equal distribution of products, then it could, he said, only produce convulsions and disaster. But if Socialism meant the legal protection of the weak against the strong, if it meant the performance by public bodies of duties which individuals would perform either not as well or not at all for themselves, then its principles were admitted all over the field of our social activity."

Mr. Morley suggesting to the Eighty Club (November 19th) the halving of the duty on tea, coffee and cocoa; Free Education and Free School Meals for starving children; "Betterment" Rating and the Rating of Ground Rents; Increase of the Death Duties on Land; and elective Parish Councils.

“ . . . the Liberal hand still holds a strong suit—the cards political. . . . Leaseholds’ Enfranchisement, Mr. O’Brien’s claim to dress in gaol like a gentleman. . . . Manhood suffrage, Female suffrage, the woes of deceased wives’ sisters, the social ambition of dissenting ministers, the legal obstacle to the ‘free’ acquirement of landed property, home rule for ‘dear old Scotland’ and ‘neglected little Wales’, extraordinary tithes, reform of the House of Lords: all these and any number of other obstacles may be successfully thrown in the way of the forward march of the Socialist army. And the worst of it all is that . . . the Liberal will have us on the hip; for to out-and-out democratisation we are fully pledged, and must needs back up any attack on hereditary or class privilege. . . . But, to get back to our metaphor of the card table, the political suit does not exhaust the Liberal hand. There still remains a card to play—a veritable trump. Sham Socialism is the name of it, and Mr. John Morley the man to plank it down.”

The Fabian Essays (December 1889) forecast the possibility of a long future still for non-Socialist Radicalism.

FOR a fortnight before August 30, 1889, when the Parliamentary Session ended, the attention, first, of London and then of the whole country, had been drawn to the Great Dock Strike that was paralysing the business of the greatest port in the world. It was a remarkable strike in many ways and first awoke "public opinion" at large to the fact that even the weakest sections of "Labour", rendered more combative by incessant Socialist propaganda and aided by the "better times" of 1888-90, were attempting, by economic action, to force the concessions from their employers which, from their very nature, could not be brought either by the "West End Riots" of February 8, 1886, or by the "Bloody Sunday" of November 13, 1887. Such S.D.F. demonstrations had, to some extent, frightened Government and Society into humaner Poor Relief administration and larger Relief Fund subscriptions to help the poor of the great cities to meet winter-distress and unemployment, exacerbated by the "bad times" of 1884-7.¹ But from the beginning of 1888 until the "Baring crisis" late in 1890, "unskilled Labour" was being set another problem by the marked trade recovery commencing late in 1887 and floated on a great wave of speculative and often unscrupulous company promotion in the City for the most miscellaneous purposes, from provincial breweries to Brazil tramways, Uruguay docks, Argentine railways and "Kaffir" gold-mines in the Transvaal.² "Labour" was now facing not the problem of organising unemployed demonstrations, during the winter seasons of a period of depression and reduced demand for labour, but of organising demands for higher wages and better conditions, to be enforced, if need were, by strike action during seasons when the demand for labour was at its maximum.

The foundations of the "New Unionism", as the Union-forming movement among "unskilled" and "general" labourers came to be called, were laid, to a very considerable extent, in 1887. For

¹ *Supra*, Chapters 1 and 2. Also *English Radicalism, 1853-1886*, pp. 332-3, 337-42.

² H. M. Hyndman, *Commercial Crises of the Nineteenth Century*, Chapter 9, for an interesting account by one who was at once a Socialist leader and a "City man". He knew full well the temptation even for "reputable" finance houses to float loans without sufficiently safeguarding the investing public when as a result "promoters, stock-brokers, contractors, engineers, lawyers, and printers were all doing a splendid business, and the successful issues resulted in an increase of orders to factories and works", not to mention a great initial appearance of prosperity among the borrowers.

example, the Tea Coopers' and General Labourers' Association, the kernel of the Union which ultimately fought the Dock Strike, was founded in July 1887, and its secretary, Ben Tillett, was soon calling Sunday meetings in Victoria Park, sending out appeals to sympathetic Parliamentarians, and publishing the *A Dock-Labourer's Bitter Cry*.¹ In Sunderland, meanwhile, Joseph Havelock Wilson, an ex-seaman running a Sailors' "Bethel and Reading Room" with an eating- and lodging-house attached,² was planning to revive the almost collapsed seamen's unionism of the era of the Plimsoll agitation. And his Sailors' and Firemen's Union, founded in 1887 and giving seamen the organisation they needed to extract some benefit from the marked return of prosperity to shipping,³ was, after a series of successful strikes at the principal ports during the winter of 1888-9, to return its membership to the T.U.C. of 1889 at 65,000.⁴ Hopeful "New Unionist"

¹ B. Tillett, *Memories and Reflections*, pp. 96-103. From Tillett's account it would appear that a number of tea-warehousemen, threatened with reduced rates of pay, called the meeting which established the Union. It was a "new Union" with a vengeance, founded with a twopenny levy on those attending the foundation-meeting and incapable of doing much more financially than employing its secretary as a dock-gate agitator. Tillett had a difficult time during his first year, against contractors and managements who "hired their boosed bullies to break up our meetings", but he established a routine for his work. "Sundays were devoted", he says, "to East India Dock Gate meetings. There were evening meetings on the south side of the river, at Bermondsey and Rotherhithe and Millpond Bridge, and early morning meetings at Tidal Basin and Custom House, Albert Docks, Wapping, Surrey Commercial Gates, and the wharves and warehouses along the riverside. Tilbury, then undeveloped, we laid siege to, and denounced the 4d. an hour, which was all that was paid. We even put the wind up the Tilbury Dock management, and they began more willingly to consider grievances. . . ." It was at Tilbury, indeed, that the Union nearly broke itself by organising a strike for 5d. an hour, which was defeated after a month's struggle. The failure, there, reduced the Union from 800 to 300, and brought Tillett to a state of collapse. And then hot feeling arose at another dock, Tillett was summoned to deliver an ultimatum, and the Great Strike began!

² J. "Havelock" Wilson, M.P., *Daylight on his Career, Exposure and Challenge, Astounding Revelations*, p. 4. This pamphlet directed against him at a somewhat later stage of his career by the anti-Trade Union "National Free Labour Association" seems, nevertheless, to yield solid evidence that his word and accounts were not always to be relied upon. Despite a flamboyant career, giving him before the end a final chance of prominence during the 1914-18 War, "working-class" histories are now tending to treat him as the leading "racketeer" among Trade Union founders.

³ Cf. Hyndman, *Commercial Crises of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 152: "As business improved freights began to rise . . . until instead of the Thames and the Tyne, the Clyde, the Mersey, the Humber, and the Tees being blocked with vessels for which no employment could be found, everything in the shape of a steamer that could pound along at nine or ten knots an hour was chartered, and orders were being given in every shipyard for larger and still speedier vessels."

⁴ G. Howell, *Trade Unionism, New and Old*, p. 155. The number of Union members claimed at the T.U.C. of 1888 was only 500.

activity will be found to have preceded the Dock Strike in other branches of Labour, among Gas-Stokers,¹ for example, and among railwaymen, and, indeed, the most picturesque and effective demonstration it had made before the Dock Strike was in the match-girls' strike of July 1888, so ably and convincingly led to victory by Mrs. Besant, then at the height of her Socialist activity.²

The "New Unionism" of "unskilled" and "general" labour could hardly be said to have found its inspiration in the leaders of the "Old Unionism" of the skilled crafts. For all their democratic theories, these men were still inclined to despise the insecure and low-paid employments of the bulk of the "labouring classes" and to insist that only high weekly subscriptions, on a scale impossible for the "general labourer", would provide a Dispute Fund, large enough to impress employers, and Benefit Funds, too tempting to make Union desertion easy. They had only scepticism³ for those who considered that "fighting unions" with a mere twopence or threepence of weekly subscription, devoted, of course, almost entirely to agitation and leaving very little for the Dispute Fund and nothing at all for Benefits, could either intimidate employers, aware of their financial position, or retain the allegiance of members with nothing in the shape of Benefits to lose if they should desert the Union after the moment of hot blood had passed. And naturally the "New Unionists", impatient of the discouraging pessimism of the Old, attacked fiercely the spirit which had aimed so long at big bank-balances that the very fear of losing them had become another ally of the masters. It was argued also that big Benefits played the masters' game in another way—first the men weakened themselves by paying high subscriptions and then strengthened the masters by reducing the poor-rates which these would have to pay but for the Sickness, Unemployment, Accident, and Death Benefits of the Unions. As John Burns trenchantly put it in the S.D.F.'s *Justice* for September 3, 1887, the old Unions had "ceased to be Unions for maintaining the rights of labour, and

¹ A Gas-workers' and General Labourers' Union with Will Thorne as secretary won an important victory just before the Dock Strike.

² Cf. Annie Besant, *An Autobiography*, pp. 334-7.

³ B. Tillett, *Memories and Reflections*, p. 114, for the view even of the two friendly counsellors sent by the London Trades Council, Ben Cooper of the Cigar Makers' Union and Bill Steadman of the Barge Builders. "Neither he (Steadman) nor Ben Cooper, however, saw much hope of success attending our endeavours, and their experience left them in doubt, with a feeling of helplessness. . . ."

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have degenerated into mere middle and upper class rate-reducing institutions”.

The “New Unionism”, then, had to look rather to the Socialists for encouragement and inspiration than to the Old Unionists. Yet it is curious to note that, at this very time, Socialism and the views of the Social Democratic Federation were already penetrating deeply into the Trades Union Congress, hitherto the stronghold of Unionism of the old type. This may have been partly due to the increasing contacts established with continental workmen at the International Congresses of 1886¹ and 1888.² But it was due also to the Socialists’ early and far-sighted seizure of two “causes” essential to the next stages of “Labour” propaganda: the eight-hour day and the imposition of “model employer” conditions upon all public authorities.³ More and more mining districts, for instance, were tending to accept the Socialist policy of a statutory maximum eight-hour day as the only way of limiting production and maintaining prices in their trade.⁴ The printers, too, had found in the Socialists the quickest appreciation of the significance of their demand that all Government printing should be ordered only from “Union Shops”, and the greatest readiness to extend to all other trades the ban on “rat shops”. Indeed, after the London School Board Elections of November 1888 had taken a printer and two Socialists to the Board, a majority was procured for the epoch-making “Fair Wages” policy under which no School Board contracts were in future to be placed with employers offering less than the “standard rate of wages in the trade”, a rate which came in practice to be defined as the Union rate. When the London County Council’s “progressive” majority adopted the same policy during 1889, “Labour” had obtained an advantage whose importance expanded with the years.⁵

It is certainly time to return to the Dock Strike. On August 12, 1889, some members of Tillet’s Union called for a strike, after a dispute which revealed all the naked brutality of a system

¹ Cf. *English Radicalism, 1853-1886*, p. 341 and p. 341, n. 4.

² Cf. S. and B. Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 383.

³ Cf. *English Radicalism, 1853-1886*, pp. 335-6, for the Social Democratic Federation’s electoral programme of 1885.

⁴ These mining districts formed the Miners’ Federation in 1888, leaving the Durham and Northumberland County Unions in possession of the old National Union and the old policy of not asking Parliament for a compulsory Eight Hours Bill.

⁵ S. and B. Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 386, for the hundred and fifty local authorities who had adopted the “Fair Wages” resolution by 1894.

The Great Dock Strike

by which the Dock Companies might sub-let the unloading of ships to contractors who, in their turn, found sub-contractors to undertake the work at a much lower figure,¹ thanks to the exploitation of unfortunate "casuals", fighting at the Dock Gates for the privilege of being allowed a few hours or days of labour at 5d. an hour.² Probably the remarkable victories of the Sailors' and Firemen's Union earlier in the year³ had something to do with the dockers' readiness for a strike, and a gas-workers' victory, won at the very time a dockers' strike was brewing, must have had even more effect.⁴ Certainly Tillett was sent to the Dock Companies with a very comprehensive set of demands which had to be accepted by midday on August 14th if a strike was to be avoided. Wages were to be raised to sixpence an hour—"the dockers' tanner"; overtime was to be paid at the rate of eightpence an hour; employment was to be given to no man for less than four hours at a stretch; the contract system (and the piece-work which went with it) was to be abolished and the work hitherto assigned to contractors and sub-contractors was to be done by Dock Company officials; and, finally, the "call-ons" were to be reduced to two—one at eight in the morning and the other at four in the afternoon.⁵

¹ Cf. *Illustrated London News*, September 7, 1889, in which the sub-contractor or "ganger", interviewed, "stated that the average price per ton which he received from the contractors was from 4d. to 5d., which left the contractor a margin of 5½d. or 6½d. out of which he had to find a clerk and weigher".

² *A Dock Labourer's Bitter Cry*: "to obtain employment we are driven into a shed, iron-barred from end to end, outside of which a contractor or a foreman walks up and down with the air of a dealer in a cattle-market, picking and choosing from a crowd of men who in their eagerness to obtain employment trample each other underfoot". The men seem to have been driven harder under the contract system, and yet had constant reason to complain of tricks under which "plus" or "bonus" that ought to have been obtainable when a ship was unloaded faster than had been calculated was denied them. It was a dispute of this kind over "plus" which finally precipitated the Dock Strike.

³ G. Howell, *Trade Unionism, New and Old*, p. 155: "In January and February 1889, extensive strikes were organised for an advance of wages in many of the chief ports of the kingdom. Those strikes, if not in all cases successful, resulted in very substantial advances in wages, and what is perhaps of almost equal consequence, in better conditions of hiring, and of living on board ship."

⁴ Cf. John Burns in the *New Review* for October 1889: "Many of the meetings of the Gas Stokers' Union were held in the East End, in the neighbourhood of the docks. The dockers came in numbers, and Mr. Mann, Mr. Champion, and myself addressed thousands of them. They caught the spirit that we were trying to inform them with: and when the gas workers had won their victory (a reduction of the shifts from twelve hours to eight hours—and a slight increase of pay), the dockers in their turn became restless. . . ."

⁵ B. Tillett, *Memories and Reflections*, p. 120. The last point had its importance for a casual. If not set to work at eight o'clock, he could look for other work or go home secure that all the labour needed up to four o'clock had been "taken on" and that nothing was to be gained by waiting. It should, perhaps, be mentioned

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The men struck even before their ultimatum had expired, and the arrival upon the scene of the three most powerful Socialist "agitators" of the day, Tom Mann, John Burns and H. H. Champion, turned a small strike into a large one, especially after the comparatively "respectable" stevedores were persuaded to cease work (August 15th).

Here is a description from John Burns of the astonishing growth of the strike and the remarkable way it was financed:¹

... on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, August 15th, 16th and 17th, I spoke thirty-six times—outside of wharves, docks and warehouses. Mr. Mann, Mr. Tillett, and Mr. Champion did as much. . . . When the strike was two days advanced, the stevedores took upon them to marshal and organise the men;² no light undertaking, for recruits poured in at every hour, by fifties and by hundreds. In a little while the stevedores and the dockers were no more than units amongst the mass of strikers. The coal porters came out, the lightermen pressed after them; one trade called out another; we had at one time 100,000 men on strike.

The strain thus put on the leaders is scarcely to be conceived. . . . We had to find food for 250,000 stomachs every day of the week. . . . I myself was astonished at the inpouring of public money—Australia's subscription of £25,000 is known. In England, union after union pelted us with cheques; and every cheque was accompanied by an assurance that contributions would not be lacking, whether the strike lasted for weeks or for months. The Compositors sent us £500; the Engineers £700. . . . Five pawnbrokers out of six in the East End issued notices to the effect that they would charge no interest on articles pledged with them during the strike; and lodging-house keepers remitted their rent during the same period. The whole East End rose and stood up alongside of us. . . . We had but to feed the men to the end . . . and the day was ours.

In fact, at a very prosperous season, compassion for London's most brutalised workers brought to their aid not merely the East End and the Unions, but the Salvation Army, Toynbee Hall, and Cardinal Manning. And even so, the Dockowners would hardly have been brought to accept the final terms of settlement but for the angry pressure of impatient Shipowners, who had good reason

that the demands set out above represent only the most conspicuous put forward. There were such others as "fixed meal-times: safety in gear: special rates for Saturday afternoons, Sundays, holidays and holy days", and so on.

¹ *New Review*, October 1889.

² For the remarkable marches from Dockland and the East End behind the Stevedores' banner, which culminated in the daily mass-meetings on Tower Hill that so impressed "public opinion".

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to know that the scale of Dock Charges should have permitted something better than the pay and conditions which had provoked the strike and involved them in the heaviest loss. Finally, it was only under the urgency of dockers' demands, first in London, and then at the other ports, "organised" by the new and national Dockers' Union, that the Dock and Shipping Managements really set to work on what Tillett called the "conspiracies for wholesale robbery" among "a rapacious gang of jobbing contractors" who had bled both the men and the companies.¹

The dockers' fight and victory had almost immediate effects. Dozens of poorly paid and "unorganised" trades put forward demands for better wages and conditions and, often enough, won very considerable improvements without a strike. Here is one account of some of the London "movements":²

Carmen employed by the Post Office have secured rises of from one shilling to four shillings per week; and almost every carman employed throughout the whole East End of London has gained somewhat. The workers in the chemical manufactories along the banks of the Thames, the engineering labourers, and, in all, some 200 trades in London have gained a full 10 per cent. on their wages, and shorter hours, by the Dockers' Strike. Shunters, porters, and a host of labourers, not directly connected with the docks, have secured their benefits. . . . We have to note, above all, that labour throughout the whole East End of London has, by the outcome of this strike, been placed upon a higher and more substantial footing with regard to capital than it has ever stood upon before. . . .

The appearance of all this belligerent "New Unionism" upon the scene undoubtedly strengthened what may be called the pressure of the "Extreme Left" not only in industrial politics, but in politics proper. Already, during the critical stage of the Dock Strike, there had been the possibility of a declaration of "the General Strike" in London.³ And after the Dock Strike was over, the leaders of the "New Unionism", the Sailors' and Firemen's Union, the Dockers' Union, the Gas-workers and, to some extent, the Miners' Federation, undertook a pressure almost in the S.D.F.

¹ B. Tillett, *Memories and Reflections*, p. 161.

² *New Review*, October 1889, pp. 419, 421.

³ B. Tillett, *Memories and Reflections*, pp. 141-3, gives the Manifesto to the Workers of London, dated August 29th and largely due to the influence of the Socialists, Burns, Mann and Champion, upon the rest of the Strike Committee. But the "General Strike" call was promptly withdrawn when it became obvious that it would cost the strikers a large amount of "good will" from the "general public".

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direction at home, and an "International" policy of co-operation with the very "Red" and Socialistic Trade Unionism abroad.

This is not the place to describe such results as the International Miners' Congress summoned to Jolimont in 1890 or to relate what happened when the Socialists tried, in harmony with the Continent, to procure England's first "May Day" celebrations on Thursday, May 1, 1890, while the London Trades' Council endeavoured to get them deferred to Sunday, May 4th, on the ground of numerous "practical" objections involved.¹ But it is certainly proper to notice here, and before attention is recalled once more to politics in the restricted Westminster sense, what pressure was undertaken on the "advanced" Radicals in Parliament in order to commit them to such Socialist causes as the Eight Hours Day. Morley and the 136 M.P.s who had followed him, even against Gladstone, on the Royal Grants dispute² were now the hope of the Fabian strategists who dreamed of turning them into a Radical-Socialist party by offering Morley the succession to Gladstone, and the anti-Royal Grants party a tremendous majority at the next General Election if they would but accept the principle of the Eight Hours Day. Here is one writer on Mr. Morley's hesitations, after the Amalgamated Engineers of his own constituency had already pushed him a certain way³ and Fabian

¹ Cf. G. Howell, *Trade Unionism, New and Old*, pp. 188-92, who reports the Socialist "National Federation of all Trades and Industries" undertaking the May 1st celebrations to have been far from generally successful, but that "goaded by the attacks of the Socialists and New Trade Unionists, and possibly stimulated by emulation, the London Trades Council was prompted to take an active part in the Labour Demonstrations . . . on May 4th, in Hyde Park. Most of the London Trades took part in that demonstration. These were divided into eight groups as follows: (1) The Leather trades, (2) Metal trades, (3) Cabinet and Fancy trades, (4) General trades, (5) Shipping trades, (6) Clothing trades, (7) Printing and Paper trades, (8) the Building trades. In addition to the foregoing, any branches of trade not included in the above eight sections, and the different bodies of labourers were organised as a contingent, under the guidance of the Socialist League."

² See *supra*, Chapter 4.

³ *New Review*, December 1889, p. 609, for Mr. Morley's speech at a soirée in connection with the A.S.E. (April 22, 1889): "I think that to work eight hours is better than to work nine hours. I think that we must remember that our working classes are not mere machines. They are not merely hands: they have heads, and they have hearts and homes to look after. Therefore, I am for reducing the hours of labour to such limits as may be practicable. But I for one am firm on this, that the limitation must be effected, as some of the greatest reforms have been, by our own firm individual efforts, and not by giving Parliament to do that which Parliament is not well fitted to do. . . . Mind, I am not against eight hours, but a Parliament Eight Hours Bill. . . ."

But if Mr. Morley had been allowed to get off as cheaply as this in April, matters were a good deal different by the end of the year. According to the *New*

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wire-pullers had tried to stimulate his further progress by committing the London Liberal and Radical Union¹ to the Eight Hours Day for Government and Municipal Employees:²

What Radicals really want from Mr. Morley whom they greatly respect and admire, and also from the Liberal leaders, is not over-nice criticism, but a plain declaration as to how far they mean to go. Nothing less than this will satisfy us; but what is more important, nothing else will attract the working-man's vote. . . . The trade unions are more and more falling under the control of advanced men and the domination of advanced theories. For instance, plans of land and mines nationalisation . . . are now mere commonplaces of Trades Union politics, the annual resolutions in their favour being passed without even a formal vote, while Mr. Labouchere, in his Scottish tour, accepts the latter as part of the Radical programme. Mr. Henry George addresses scores of middle-class audiences and gets unanimous votes for his resolutions. What is the Liberal party—the party of the masses as against the classes—doing to meet these new movements? I confess that I cannot see that some Liberal leaders are doing anything. . . .

In point of fact the "Liberal leaders" were not so easily driven in the Socialist direction as optimistic Fabians had dreamed. They recognised, what some worried Tories did not,³ that all the Socialist-Radical bustle and noise did not yet amount to very much in electoral terms. Even the anti-Royal Granters were mostly rich men, often Dissenters with a grievance or unavowed Freethinkers whose Radicalism meant primarily angry impatience with the great part still played in the State by Lords, Church, and Crown, and whose Democracy was, primarily, eagerness to secure

Review, December 1889, p. 615, Mr. Morley "when he was heckled at Newcastle a few days since—being ordered up for the purpose by It-that-will-be-Obedyed—he expressed surprise that he should be subjected to pressure like a candidate on the eve of an election contest. Inquiries as to what he thought of this and that—all, of course, selected from the New Radical catechism—were put to him by persons with notebooks in their hands, just as if the General Election were seven days off."

¹ *New Review*, December 1889, p. 608.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 610–11. The writer signed himself "A Socialist Radical" and wrote very much like Sidney Webb.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, December 1889, for "A Liberal-Conservative" who half-feared the worst from the anti-Royal Granters: "Of course the Parliamentary New Radicals have no intention of displacing Home Rule from the Gladstonian programme: the Irish vote is far too valuable for that. But to the delight of the Irish Parnellites, who are all for confusion in England, they propose to hoist the Socialist 'Jolly Roger' in every constituency, at the same time offering to every Whig in their company the choice of submission or exclusion . . . they are confident that the victory at the next general election is not to be won on Home Rule principles, and is to be won by calling out the masses to fight for plunder and the legalisation thereof."

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the electoral means to impose "progress" on these and other "backward" parts of the "Constitution" like the Army, Navy and Quarter Sessions. Without these men or others, possessed of the same mentality and wealth, few effective "advanced" candidatures were possible in a country which still paid its legislators nothing, expected them to finance, from their own pockets, the party machinery of the constituencies and looked to them, also, for "becoming" contributions to the workmen's clubs of their divisions, the Friendly Societies and the Hospitals, and a most varied assortment of miscellaneous charities besides.¹

And if there were no obvious alternative candidates whom Socialists could threaten to adopt, it was also more than doubtful whether the majority of "steady working men", even in the poor quarters of the great cities, really wished to see "advanced members" forced to adopt Socialism or perish at the polls. For all the "Socialist" resolutions now beginning to be imposed on Trade Union meetings by energetic minorities, the fear that unilateral and unconditional adoption of the Eight Hours Day by England would, in the long run, mean smaller pay-packets and a gradual loss of trade to the foreigner had not been exorcised from the heart of the "steady working man".² Bradlaugh Radicalism rather than Hyndman Socialism still represented the average working man's creed, and, even so, "Radical mistakes" like the "betrayal of Gordon" or an increased tax on beer were apt to drive him in irritation into the welcoming arms of Tory Democracy.

The "Liberal Managers", then, when drawing up the agenda for the great annual meeting of the National Liberal Federation at Manchester in December 1889, saw no reason to surrender to "Socialism". Acceptance of a number of old Radical demands of long standing would fully meet the electoral need, at any rate, for the time being. And, in fact, now that most of the "Liberal Peers", who had so long been the obstacle to the formal adoption of an "advanced" platform, were co-operating with Salisbury in a

¹ Liberal members were often approached for a contribution to chapel-building funds, and Conservatives found it advisable to help "voluntary schools". Then members of all parties would be approached in the event of pit- or factory-accidents.

² G. Howell, *Trade Unionism, New and Old*, pp. 170-205, for a long section giving ample proof of this. Even when a none too convincing majority had, by dint of enormous agitation, been secured at the T.U.C. of September 1890, the Textile, and the Boot and Shoe Trades, and even the Engineers and the Dockers (these last had suddenly changed their minds) were against an application to Parliament.

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fashion that put them plainly beyond recall, the adoption of a full-blooded Radical programme promised the greatest advantages. On the one hand, electoral victory at the polls would become even more certain despite the undoubted disadvantages attaching to Home Rule advocacy.¹ And on the other hand, "Socialist" pressure could be evaded until some big strike should blunder into a particularly damaging defeat calculated to prevent even the most "advanced" of "steady working men" from asking Radicalism for more than an occasional concession. The first big check sustained by the "New Unionism", the defeat of the Gas-Stokers' strike in South London, was, indeed, to take place shortly after the Manchester Conference and was to be followed by others.²

The "very advanced" Radical programme adopted by the National Liberal Federation at Manchester should now be given. Here is the *Annual Register's* useful summary to indicate how far on the road to the "Newcastle Programme" of 1891—the programme on which the General Election of 1892 was to be fought—"official Liberalism" had already decided to go:³

Registration Reforms.—Reduction of the qualifying period to 3 months; making successive occupation universal and the appointment of responsible registration officers.

Parliamentary Reforms.—One man, one vote: returning officers to be paid out of the rates: payment of members by the State: all elections on the same day: shorter Parliaments: reform of the House of Lords.

Land Law Reforms.—Security for tenants' improvements; enfranchisement of leaseholders: increased powers for obtaining land for allotments: abolition of restrictions on transfer of land: taxation of ground rents and mining royalties.

Social Reforms.—Better housing of the working classes: extension of the Factory Acts: popular control of liquor traffic by localities.

¹ The file of a typical Radical paper like the *Northern Echo* of Darlington leaves one with the impression that Liberal meetings were fairly unanimous as long as the speaker on the platform was denouncing Irish Coercion. When a speaker passed from attacking Coercion to advocating Home Rule, "Cheers" and "Hear, hears" seem to have become less numerous and hearty.

² Cf. T. Mackay (editor), *A Plea for Liberty*, p. 212, for favourable views on the action of the Chairman of the South Metropolitan Gas Company in "breaking" the strike by importing and training stokers to replace the strikers: "the energetic policy of Mr. George Livesey converted men who said they were out on strike into men who were out of employment, and all the talk of the necessity of arbitration or the possibility of it, all the well-meaning efforts of cardinals and ministers to interfere in the matter were entirely futile. There was nothing to arbitrate about . . . the outgoing men were men who had been gas-stokers. . . . Their best chance of becoming gas-stokers again was to seek employment elsewhere."

³ *Annual Register*, 1889, English History, p. 245.

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Local Government Reforms.—Establishment of district and parish councils: increased powers to municipal bodies in London and elsewhere.

Taxation Reforms.—Abolition of present duties on tea, coffee and cocoa: equalisation of death duties on real and personal property: just division of rates between owner and occupier.

Education Reforms.—Free education in schools under popular representative control: establishment of continuation schools: increased technical and intermediate education.

The Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Established Church in Scotland and Wales: and application of tithe to purely national purposes.

Meanwhile the Conservative Cabinet was faced with the task of drawing up a Sessional programme suitable for the times. It could hardly be pretended even by his warmest admirer that Lord Salisbury had any special gift as a drawer-up of popular programmes. Indeed, all his intellect and ability ran the other way¹ and made him the keenest High Tory critic of "Radical shams" in the country. Besides, as Foreign Secretary, his attention had largely to be devoted to such things as the ugly Imperial squabbling proceeding on the Zanzibar coasts between the British East Africa Company and parallel German interests, the very similar jockeying for position going on in South Central Africa between Rhodes's new South Africa Company and the Portuguese authorities and, finally, the Niger Company's weakening of the Foreign Office's hand in West Africa by its pursuit of a trade-monopoly policy, unwarranted by its Charter and illegal under international arrangements established in 1885. What part of Salisbury's attention was not claimed by the difficult Foreign Office routine, attending these dubious accompaniments of the new "Imperial age", tended to become concentrated on very characteristic and absorbing High Tory interests. The ecclesiastical nominations, for example, were giving Salisbury a great deal of occupation at this period, and so was the disquieting readiness of the India Office to concede to "native India" the admission of a small elective element into the Provincial and All-India Legislatures.²

¹ Lady Gwendolen Cecil's *Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury*, though written with a daughter's tact and discrimination, supplies plenty of evidence of his real opinions on the "democracy" of his time.

² *Ibid.*, vol. iv, 1887-92, will be found to devote considerably more attention to the subjects listed above and others like them, than to the party-struggle proper. It must be admitted, nevertheless, that Salisbury's papers show him able to rise to the large view in nearly everything he handled except, perhaps, Church nominations. Thus in African questions he had a disconcerting habit

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Yet even Salisbury, absorbed though he was by a very different order of questions, knew that it was necessary to bring himself, before the 1890 Session opened, to the drawing up of an apparently "progressive" programme for the year. Inwardly contemptuous though he might be of some of the "shams" of democratic statesmanship and resisting, though he still was, the "progressive" cry for "Free Education", Salisbury was realist enough to recognise that Chamberlain and his Radical section of Liberal-Unionism must not be driven to desperation. Moreover, Salisbury's nephew, Balfour, had good reason to know that the Birmingham statesman was perfectly justified in his view that the anti-Coercion cry would kill the "Unionist Coalition", and the Union itself, at the next General Election, unless "bold reforming measures" convinced the "country" that admitted Irish grievances, economic and political, had been generously and courageously dealt with. An Irish Land Purchase Bill to increase the tenant-purchase facilities offered Ireland by the Treasury,¹ and an Irish Local Government Bill to bestow upon Ireland the "elective county governments" awarded to England in 1888 and to Scotland in 1889 were, in fact, to be the main items of "progress" finally put upon the Government's 1890 programme. And if the Welsh situation forced also upon the programme such a leading item as a Tithes Bill which hardly anybody dared to call "progressive", Goschen was nevertheless planning in his Budget what he apparently hoped would be accepted as a modestly "reforming" solution of the "Licensing Problem".

of seeing the weaknesses of the British claims if the "men on the spot" pushed them too far, and his very "unprogressive" Indian position he could defend ably enough.

¹ The Bill ultimately introduced by Mr. Balfour on March 24th was the bolder because it also envisaged "the improvement of the condition of the poorer and more congested districts" and the "construction of a land department".

CHAPTER VI

THE DOWNFALL OF PARNELL

"November 26, 1890. Since the month of December 1885 my whole political life has been governed by a supreme regard to the Irish question. For every day, I may say, of these five years, we have been engaged in laboriously rolling up hill the stone of Sisyphus. . . . I have been endeavouring all these years to reason with the voters of the kingdom, and when the voter now tells me that he cannot give a vote for making the Mr. Parnell of to-day the ruler of Irish affairs under British sanction, I do not know how to answer him. . . ."

"November 28, 1890. It was at first my expectation, and afterwards my desire, that Mr. Parnell would retire by a perfectly spontaneous act. As the likelihood of such a course became less and less, while time ran on, and the evidences of the coming disaster were accumulated, I thought it would be best that he should be impelled to withdraw, but by an influence conveyed to him, at least, from within the limits of his own party. I therefore begged Mr. Justin McCarthy to acquaint Mr. Parnell of what I thought as to the consequences of his continuance."

Gladstone's own memoranda after the "Parnell divorce scandal" had imperilled Home Rule.

"WISBECH WON. Wisbech is won. There is again . . . joy in the hearts of those who are striving for the settlement of the great Irish questions and the great English questions which though neglected by the Government are growing in urgency every day. The flowing tide is flowing on and bearing helpless before it the whole band of partisans who have too long obstructed the progress of the country. . . . Ministers brag much of that which they have accomplished. They have, they say, restored confidence to English trade, brought peace and prosperity to Ireland, made the British name respected on the Continent and throughout the world. In very striking contrast to these pretensions are the repeated defeats which Ministers suffer when circumstances compel them to submit their policy and their performances to the judgement of the electors. . . ."

The Radical *Northern Echo*, July 25, 1891, rejoices over a by-election gain from the Government.

"It is an absurd programme, an impracticable programme, and therefore a dishonest programme. It is a programme

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which begins by offering everything to everybody, and it will end by giving nothing to anybody. . . . Scotch disestablishment and Welsh disestablishment like a pair of disconsolate sisters must wait unconsolated in the lobby.

"We are to have one man, one vote. Yes, I quite agree . . . and I am prepared to vote for it—only I am not prepared to vote for it alone. . . . Let us do away with . . . the greatest anomaly of all—that which gives to Ireland in proportion to population a representation 20 per cent better than it gives to England, Wales and Scotland."

Chamberlain attacks the "Newcastle Programme" on which the "Gladstonians" have elected to fight, October 13, 1891.

THE story of the 1890 Session is hardly worth telling in the detail that has been devoted to its predecessors. From the Session's very opening on February 11th it was plain that the Oppositions, Gladstonian and Parnellite, were going to give all the trouble they could in an effort to force on a Government defeat and a General Election as soon as might be. And there were repeated occasions when it seemed that Lord Randolph Churchill, still waiting his chance for a "tit for tat" with his former colleagues, and impatient Radical Unionists, increasingly tiring of their "Coalition" with Conservatism, might help the Gladstonian Front Bench's plans for defeating the Government. Thus, on March 3rd, when Mr. Smith, Leader of the House, had to move a vote thanking the Parnell Commissioners for their belated Report,¹ dangerous possibilities opened up in view of the Report's still contriving to balance against Parnell's vindication from *The Times* charges, other inculpatory matter from the 1880-2 period. "Public opinion" was now, since the Pigott exposures, in such a mood of revulsion from the spirit which had once energetically piled Pelion upon Ossa in the matter of statistics of Irish "criminal outrages" that Gladstone was encouraged to move a critical amendment. It proposed to strike from the Government resolution the words acknowledging the Commissioners' "just and impartial conduct" and to add others reprobating the false charges which had been made against Parnell and regretting "the suffering and loss endured, through a protracted period, by reason of these acts of flagrant iniquity".² Seven days of important debate followed, and though Lord Randolph's "stab in the back" for Ministers, on March 11th, failed of its intended effect, it was none the less noted that the Churchillian amendment, abandoned by its Conservative mover when he suspected danger for the Government, was taken up by the most restless of the Radical Unionists, Mr. W. S. Caine.

It was Caine, again, who made sad trouble for the Government after Goschen's Budget statement of April 17th had announced how he intended to use a very gratifying Budget surplus of over three millions. Still hopeful of achieving a modestly "progressive"

¹ *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1891, p. 363, gives the date of issue as February 13, 1890, and the Government had announced its intention of standing by the Report on February 17th.

² *Hansard*, March 3rd.

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settlement of the "Licensing Problem" despite a previous rebuff in 1888,¹ Goschen now proposed to hand over the proceeds from a 3d. beer duty and from a 6d. surtax on spirits to the County Councils for partial use in effecting the purchase of liquor licences for cancellation. Though Goschen also offered a suspension of new licences, his alleged acceptance of the principle, that redundant licences, already existing, could not be cancelled without providing publicans and brewers with "compensation from public funds", provoked a determined and eventually successful resistance from the "Temperance Movement"² in the course of which Caine announced his return to the Gladstonian fold. By June 13th Conservative anger with the untoward results of Goschen's attempts at Licensing Reform was presenting the Government with its greatest difficulty.³ Both on that day and on June 17th there were disquieting Divisions, and when the Government announced a partial retreat on June 23rd, its half-way house proved constitutionally untenable and, on June 26th, a total withdrawal of the "Licensing Clauses" had to be undertaken. "Mismanagement" in the Parliamentary sense could hardly have gone farther or tempers in the Cabinet have become more frayed.

¹ H. W. Lucy, *A Diary of the Salisbury Parliament, 1886-1892*, under April 17, 1890, sums up the critical part of the Budget speech thus: "The financial year just closed had, as he frankly put it, been the most drunken year since the famous era of prosperity. . . . Out of a surplus of three millions and a quarter, two millions and a half was directly due to drink. Some, he said, have rushed to the beer barrel, others to the spirit bottle, others to the decanter. . . ."

² Cf. J. Newton, *W. S. Caine, M.P.*, pp. 211-24, for the action of the United Kingdom Alliance, the National Temperance Federation and the Scottish Permissive Bill Association. They estimated that the "vested interest" in licensed premises which Goschen would create by sanctioning the compensation principle "would amount to at least £200,000,000", that is that the closing of public- and beer-houses by Permissive Bills or Local Option would become impossibly expensive even where a large majority should desire to undertake it. It was an infuriating prospect for the large part of Nonconformity pledged to Local Option.

³ Lady G. Cecil's *Life of Salisbury*, iv, 153, speaks thus of the position: "Some eminently reasonable licensing clauses which Mr. Goschen had tacked on to his Budget had roused Temperance fanatics to a supreme exertion of their genius for organised postal intimidation." The Back Benchers were so furious that Goschen's miscalculated entry into such a hornet's nest as the Licensing Question should have brought the Government into peril "unnecessarily" that the Whips signalled danger and the baffled Goschen, who had Ritchie with him, talked of resigning with Ritchie in his company. Ritchie was the one Conservative Minister who had made an undisputed reputation, and Goschen's resignation might have brought with it a breakdown of the understanding with the Liberal-Unionists, fatal to the Government. Lord Salisbury, therefore, undertook to admonish recalcitrant Tories at a Carlton Club meeting of June 12th, and though his action did not ultimately save the "Licensing Clauses", it did prevent what might have become a general dissolution of the Government.

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What made matters worse was the fact that the Prime Minister's own beloved Tithe Bill, now in its third Session, had failed to stir any Conservative enthusiasm while Mr. Balfour's Irish Land Bill, intended to be the leading measure of 1890, never recovered from its chilly reception by the Irish "landed interest" and Lord Randolph Churchill's slashing criticism. By June 27th Ministers had resolved to reconcile themselves to what the Opposition denounced as a "wasted Session" so far as large measures were concerned. And even the attempt to throw a little dignity round their humiliations was destined to fail. A Select Committee was set up to examine the advisability of carrying over partly considered bills from one Session to another. Apparently Ministers' hopes was either to commit the Opposition leaders to a change in Procedure which they might need in their turn or else to throw the blame for the "wasted Session" upon them. But there was very good reason for the existing practice, and the Opposition felt not the slightest need to help the Government out of its straits with the Tithe Bill, the Irish Land Bill, or the Irish Local Government Bill. When Parliament was prorogued on August 18th, the prestige of the Salisbury Government and the "Coalition", that supported it, could hardly have fallen lower or the hopes of the Radical Opposition have risen higher.¹

If Conservative depression tended to lighten somewhat during the Recess, that was only because no by-election occurred, for a time, to remind Conservatives of the apparently inevitable fate which awaited them at the General Election. When a by-election did, in fact, take place during October, in the Eccles Division of Lancashire, there was another Gladstonian gain from Conservatism and, indeed, the tenth consecutive anti-Government return since a young Welsh Radical solicitor, Mr. David Lloyd George by name, had wrested Carnarvon Boroughs from Conservatism in April.² The "prosperity" of the country seemed to be profiting the Government nothing, and the continued ebullience of the

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1891, p. 356, for a non-party view: "It was admitted on all sides that the Government sadly mismanaged their business, and this, coupled with the obstructive tactics on the part of the Opposition, was mainly the cause of so unproductive a Session. . . . Mr. Goschen's attempt to deal with the licensing question, owing to the vigorous opposition on the part of the Gladstonian Liberals, proved very disastrous to the Government, and had, after a great waste of time to be abandoned." Salisbury himself was in despair at one stage.

² Cf. *British Almanac and Companion*, 1891, p. 281, for the by-election list of the year.

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"New Unionism" to be neither able to frighten average well-to-do "Gladstonians" into Conservatism or, at least, into the Liberty and Property Defence League,¹ nor, alternatively, to create an independent "Labour" party to split the Radical vote. At a remarkable by-election at East Bristol, for example, fought in May, the Conservative challenge for the seat of a deceased Gladstonian had been aided by the Conservative candidate of 1886 consenting to stand again, and by the appearance of a foremost representative of the "New Unionism", J. Havelock Wilson of the Sailors' and Firemen's Union, to fight an industrially excited constituency as the representative of "Labour". Yet despite the 602 "Labour" votes raised for Wilson at the cost of £506 of the Sailors' and Firemen's funds,² the Gladstonian poll had grown from the 3,672 of 1886 to 4,775 and the majority over the Conservative from 1,736 to 2,875.

The worst perils of the Conservative position were, however, nearly over, thanks to the astonishing consequences of a divorce suit, that of *O'Shea v. Parnell and Mrs. O'Shea*. It had long been suspected in most political circles that Parnell was deeply involved in a liaison with Mrs. O'Shea, and some even believed that Captain O'Shea, who had nourished high political hopes during his Parliamentary career of 1880-6, had tolerated the position because of his electoral obligations to Parnell. Even when Parnell's influence was no longer exerted to keep O'Shea in Parliament, Parnell was comparatively safe from a divorce suit so long as "great expectations" for the O'Shea children remained to be garnered in from Mrs. O'Shea's very old and very wealthy aunt. But once the aunt was dead and a favourable will secure, Parnell was in constant danger of being summoned to the Divorce Court, the more so as a verdict against Parnell and Mrs. O'Shea would strengthen the legal claims on part of Mrs. O'Shea's new fortune that her husband was putting forward on behalf of their children. It is still a matter

¹ The Liberty and Property Defence League was already conducting active anti-Socialist propaganda under the auspices of such "old-fashioned Radicals" as Herbert Spencer and Auberon Herbert. These could claim the logical justification that their Radicalism had sought to free the energies and activity of the individual from the shackles and vested interests of the past and that the new enemy threatening the enslavement of the individual was the rising spirit of "State Socialism". One off-shoot of the League was later to give the Trade Unions much trouble as the National Free Labour Association fighting, as it did, the cause of the "oppressed" workman who did not desire to join a Union.

² Cf. J. "Havelock" Wilson, M.P., *Daylight on his Career*, p. 13, as later issued by the National Free Labour Association.

of dispute whether, apart from his personal, political and financial grievances against his wife and her lover, O'Shea needed encouragement from Chamberlain to overcome his Catholic scruples about divorce, reinforced as these doubtless were, by Catholic ecclesiastics, aware of the damage that the Home Rule cause might sustain.¹ It is, at any rate, certain that Chamberlain did give O'Shea some encouragement and that O'Shea thought he had a chance of resuming his political career as a Liberal-Unionist after he should have helped to break Parnell.² Both Chamberlain and O'Shea knew from the misfortunes that had overtaken Sir Charles Dilke after he had been involved in a divorce case what attitude the "Nonconformist conscience" was likely to take up. And, if in Dilke's case a prominent politician, considered by many as a possible Prime Minister-to-be, had first had to be excluded from Gladstone's Cabinet of 1886 and had then failed to retain his seat at the 1886 elections, it was morally certain that, in Parnell's case, the consequences would be similar but, in view of the importance of the "Irish Question", on a more catastrophic scale.

The Gladstonian leaders, like other men, knew that Parnell was facing a dangerous divorce suit, but even they were unprepared for the squalor of the details revealed in court on November 15th. After a decision, expedited by the absence of defence, had been given against Parnell on November 17th they waited for the Catholic hierarchy of Ireland and the Irish Parliamentary Party to make it plain to Parnell that, for Ireland's sake, he must lay down the Irish leadership.³ Meanwhile the annual proceedings of the National Liberal Federation at Sheffield on November 20th and 21st were overcast by justifiable fears that great and possibly decisive electoral advantages had passed to the Government. By November 24th, when the Gladstonian leaders were gathering in London for the opening of Parliament on the morrow, it became plain that, if Home Rule was to have any prospects at all at the next General Election, immediate action was called for from themselves. Their post-bags were full of the protests of the

¹ Cf. Henry Harrison, *Parnell, Joseph Chamberlain and Mr. Garvin*, for an unfavourable view of Chamberlain.

² Cf. Garvin's *Life of Chamberlain*, ii, 397-405.

³ Morley's *Gladstone*, ii, 501-6. The counter-case for Parnell is ably put in St. John Ervine's *Parnell* where the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, who denounced the Irish leader as "the most infamous adulterer of this century", is treated as the villain of the piece with W. T. Stead, the journalist, a close second.

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"Nonconformist conscience" and of demands that the "Liberal cause" should be publicly dissociated from "gross and inexcusable adultery". The management of the Liberal party reported that three Liberal candidatures had already been abandoned and that more were sure to follow.¹ And yet Parnell had established such a control of Irish politics that a great Dublin meeting acclaimed his leadership with enthusiasm on November 20th, and everything seemed in train for his uncontested re-nomination to the Party Chairmanship at Westminster on November 25th.²

Parnell was, in fact, re-elected Chairman of the Irish party on November 25th, after he had successfully evaded messages from Gladstone and Morley whose purport he had guessed and which, out of consideration for him, had not, with one exception, been communicated to his followers. A last appeal to Parnell failed, and Gladstone's view that Parnell's "continuance at the present moment in the leadership would be disastrous in the highest degree to the cause of Ireland" had to be communicated to the Press in the shape of a letter from Gladstone to Morley.³ Though some of the Parnellite members were now encouraged to insist on a new party meeting, they exposed themselves to the dangerous charge of accepting dictation from English politicians on peculiarly Irish matters, already decided. Parnell and his partisans did, in fact, contrive, with such charges as these, to spin out the bitter and notorious proceedings in Committee Room No. 15 until December 6th. And even when, emboldened by a pronouncement of the Irish Catholic bishops and reports of anti-Parnell feeling in America, forty-five Irish Home Rulers decided to quit Room No. 15 and elect Mr. Justin McCarthy as their Chairman, they only succeeded in splitting the Irish party into two, for twenty-six Irish members still held by Parnell. The fierce internecine

¹ Morley's *Gladstone*, ii, 504.

² It is most important to remember that not only did most Irish members owe their seats to Parnell but that some had looked to him for election expenses and even for help in maintaining themselves at Westminster. Parnell had, in fact, been the controlling trustee of the considerable Irish party funds, kept in a Paris bank and including the Irish-American contributions of a decade. Though there were three trustees altogether, it had been provided that withdrawals of contributions could be effected with two trustees' signatures, one of these always to be Parnell's. And under these arrangements it appears that Parnell's control of the funds survived the ultimate refusal of a majority of the party to follow him and gave him a very strong position when representatives of this majority attempted to bargain with him in 1891. His terms, indeed, proved too high for acceptance even by a needy party.

³ Morley's *Gladstone*, ii, 507-10.

controversies in which the Irish factions thereupon involved themselves and tried to drag Gladstone must have been almost as damaging to the Home Rule cause with British "public opinion" as would have been Parnell's unchallenged retention of the Irish leadership. It was not for nothing that many people believed, during the winter of 1890-1, that Salisbury had but to dissolve Parliament in order to secure an anti-Home Rule victory by a possibly sensational margin.¹ Only the widespread working-class affection for "the Grand Old Man" threw some element of doubt about the confident Conservative calculations.

Salisbury may have shrunk from the immorality of making a vital General Election turn almost exclusively on an irrelevant divorce case. But he was also tempted to continue the existing Parliament by prospects of a relatively easy Session, fruitful of legislation, which might enhance the Ministry's record when it finally appealed to the country. Nor could he altogether have omitted from his calculations the likelihood that the Irish factional quarrels would growingly sicken the British public with every successive month, and that every successive month might also, in view of Gladstone's great age, prove the last in which active assistance would be forthcoming from him on behalf of "Radical" causes.

But whatever were the Prime Minister's motives, certain it is that the Session of 1890-1 proved the most successful of the Government's career. Thanks to the troubles of the Opposition, the Address was carried with little debate and no divisions on November 25th, the very first day of the Session. On November 27th a First Reading was secured for some important Bills including the Prime Minister's favourite Tithe Bill and Mr. Balfour's far-reaching Irish measures, the Land Purchase and Congested Districts Bill and the Land Department (Ireland) Bill. Next day the Government secured the whole time of the House until the Christmas adjournment so that by December 3rd the Land Purchase Bill had been read a second time, and by December 8th the Land Department Bill. Such progress was the more remarkable in that a large part of the Conservative party was known not to

¹ Cf. Sir H. Maxwell's *A Century of Empire*, iii, 206, for the view of this Tory M.P.: "The double scandal of the divorce case and the break-up of the Irish party had brought Home Rule into such deep discredit that the Unionists would have been sure of a sweeping victory at the polls." Lord Randolph Churchill was of the same opinion.

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like the Irish Bills in the least—Bills to set up a species of “State Socialism” in the Congested Districts¹ and to put more huge Treasury credits, on still easier terms, at the service of Irish tenants. These might profess, indeed, the desire to buy out their landlords, but were quite capable, in the Conservative view, of beginning a mass-refusal to repay the Government advances at any favourable moment during the necessarily long years of redemption.

But if the Irish land proposals were little to the taste of many Conservative members, these members had at least the satisfaction of knowing that Chamberlain considered them a trump-card to employ against Gladstonians in the constituencies. On the platform, indeed, even the relatively minor Irish Seed Potatoes Act and the Tramways Act² could be used as further proof that the “true friends of Ireland” were the Unionists and that the Gladstonians were merely the friends of the “discredited” Irish politicians, committed, apparently, to a generation of savage controversy over the details of a “sordid divorce case”. And whether Gladstone came forward with a Religious Disabilities Removal Bill to enable Catholics to hold the English Lord Chancellorship and the Irish Lord-Lieutenancy³ or Morley brought new evidence against the action of the Irish Constabulary under the Coercion Act,⁴ whether Shaw-Lefevre urged arbitration between landlord and tenants as necessary on some of the Irish estates (where the breakdown of the “Plan of Campaign” had left tenant-ries at the landlords’ mercy)⁵ or Labouchere showed how the Government’s Land Purchase Bill was based on the very principles condemned alike by Conservatives and Chamberlainites in 1886⁶

¹ Defined in the Bill as districts containing more than twenty per cent of the population of a County or Riding living in such poverty, because of the minute sub-division of holdings, that the rateable value per head of the population was less than thirty shillings. A capital of one and a half millions was to be placed at the disposal of a Congested Districts Board to aid migration and emigration, agriculture and industries.

² The long titles of these Acts will explain their purpose. The first figures in the Statute Book as “An Act to provide for the Supply of Seed Potatoes to Occupiers and Cultivators of Land in Ireland” and the second gave tramway companies in Ireland power to increase their capital without an expensive quest for enabling powers.

³ *Hansard*, February 4th, for the rejection by 256 votes against 223.

⁴ *Ibid.*, February 16th, for the rejection of Morley’s motion by 320 to 245.

⁵ *Ibid.*, January 30th, for the defeat of his motion by 213 to 152. Shaw-Lefevre had been an active Gladstonian Cabinet Minister and was also the author of two damaging anti-Coercion works, one of them entitled *Irish Members and English Gaolers*.

⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, April 10th.

—all this, it was foreseen, might help the Opposition but little if the General Election could but be staged by the Government in really favourable circumstances.

On British issues, also, the Government, again not without some impulsion from Chamberlain in the rear, was presenting electors with a programme of solid “practical” benefits very different, it was claimed, from the wordy, vote-catching and perilous programmes of the National Liberal Federation. Already in 1890 the Government, when foiled in its plans of allowing the County Councils to use “whisky (and beer) money” from the Local Taxation Account for licence-extinction, had finally hit upon the not unpromising idea of allowing them to use it for “technical instruction”. That was an “educational advance” whose importance grew steadily as the years revealed its potentialities for forwarding secondary and higher education on the scientific side, for financing scholarship systems, and for preparing the day of County Council education.¹ But when Ministers, again in fortunate possession of a Budget surplus, announced, in April 1891, their intention of using it to make a second and much more important educational advance, the occasion was rightly regarded as one of great significance in regard to prospects at the next General Election. Under the Elementary Education Act of 1891, in fact, no less a boon, it was claimed, was being offered to the nation than Free Education—to be achieved positively by offering ten shillings per annum per child to all elementary schools willing to take it in lieu of “school pence”, and negatively by withdrawing all Education Department bans on “Free Education” and substituting instead the prohibition of fee-taking except for special purposes specifically sanctioned. And if Radicals objected to the fact that “voluntary schools” under ecclesiastical control were to receive the ten shillings of “fee grant” not merely on the same but actually on better terms than Board Schools without ecclesiastical axes to grind,² “practical” considerations could be quoted

¹ G. Balfour, *Educational Systems of Great Britain and Ireland*, p. 183, for the £472,560 spent by English local authorities (exclusive of Monmouthshire) in the year 1892-3 and the £654,463 spent in 1895-6.

² Thus special arrangements allowed groups of neighbouring “voluntary schools” to be formed using their “fee grant” receipts as a common fund. It seemed, too, as though some “voluntary schools” might succeed in drawing both the “fee grant” and yet retain “school pence” for “special purposes”. It was to some extent a counter-concession to the Radical view that provision was made for School-Board erection where “free education” was not, in practice, available to all who required it in areas monopolised by “voluntary schools”.

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against them from no less an authority than the father of School-Boardism himself, Joseph Chamberlain. Had not the Birmingham leader "confessed" to the altered view that any measure, "painlessly extinguishing the voluntary schools" by putting them at a disadvantage with Board Schools, would precipitate 3½ million children upon the unprepared heads of School Board managers and expose the ratepayers to capital costs of £35,000,000 for school-building alone, not to mention £5,000,000 extra every year for running costs?¹

It would appear, however, that propaganda use of the Free Education Bill soon overreached itself. After all, the electors could not be kept from knowing that all the real objections had come from Conservatives, and that Government spokesmen had often defended it on no more exalted ground than that it upset Radical plans for a much more sweeping Bill if there should be a change of Government, a Bill, perhaps, for forcing the majority of "voluntary schools" out of existence, as such, by denying them "fee grant" unless they put themselves under "popular elective control". Propaganda use of the Factory and Workshop Act of 1891 also, though attempted,² could hardly prove a tremendous success with the "working classes" once it was known that a Radical amendment had had to be carried against the Government in order to raise the minimum age of children, employable in workshops and factories, from ten to eleven.³ Nay, what had been considered the two most valuable Conservative weapons for an 1891 Election, the "Parnell scandal" and the charge that Gladstone's wicked Radicals were committed to an instant disruption of the Empire by "evacuating" Ireland and Egypt, were proved, at the by-elections of the spring and summer of 1891, to be dangerously unreliable. When, towards the end of July 1891, the unexpected Gladstonian gain of the rural Wisbech Division of Cambridgeshire was effected by a surprisingly large turnover of votes,⁴ even *The Times* began to resign itself to another

¹ Cf. Garvin's *Chamberlain*, ii, 428.

² It should be added that some use was also made by Conservatives of the fact that the Government, stimulated by the extensive strikes of 1889 and 1890, had announced on February 21, 1891, that a Royal Commission would inquire into the relations between employers and employed. And Ben Tillett was appointed a member of this "Labour Commission".

³ Cf. *Hansard*, June 18th, for the defeat of the Government by 202 votes against 186 on an amendment moved by Sydney Buxton (Poplar).

⁴ Cf. *Northern Echo*, July 25th, for exultant details such as that "the Tory majority in 1886 was 1,087; the Liberal majority in 1891 was 260, etc., etc."

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Gladstonian Government. Here is *The Times* comment on the Wisbech result and what had gone before:¹

It would be foolish to ignore the serious character of this defeat, or to deny that coming after the unsatisfactory results of recent contests in the Stowmarket,² Harborough, South Dorset and North Bucks divisions, it points to the growth of dangerous restlessness at least among rural voters . . . the constituency has gone back to the position of 1885. . . . This will of course encourage Mr. Gladstone in his long-cherished belief that the next General Election will place him, so far as Great Britain is concerned, as he was in 1885. We continue to hope that an appeal to the electorate at large, submerging local influences and sweeping away subordinate issues would show a different result.

As *The Times* had noted, the rural divisions, whose polls had permitted Gladstone's return to power in 1886, seemed to be meditating a repetition of the performance in 1892. The British farm labourer, discontented with the meagre results of the Conservative Allotments Act of 1887,³ certainly seemed in no mood to be much affected by dismal Conservative prophecies of what would happen to foreign policy and the Empire if Gladstone returned to power.⁴ He was much more interested in the hopeful prospects of improving his own condition opened up by some of the suggested Radical land legislation, and he was being very assiduously wooed, besides, by the National Liberal Federation. When, indeed, the Federation assembled in Council at the beginning of October and adopted the famous "Newcastle Programme", that much-abused programme of "everything for everybody" undoubtedly offered very large advantages, at the expense

¹ Cf. *Northern Echo*, July 25th.

² At the Stowmarket by-election of May 5th a Conservative majority of 543 had been converted into a Gladstonian majority of 214; at Harborough on May 1st a Conservative majority of 1,138 had been converted into a Gladstonian majority of 487; in South Dorset on May 7th a Conservative majority of 991 had fallen to 40; and in North Bucks, finally, the election of May 28th for a seat already won back from Conservatism in 1889 showed a not very strong Gladstonian candidate, new to the division, able to increase the majority from 208 to 381.

³ Cf. Joseph Arch, *The Story of his Life*, p. 390, for the continued discontent even after an Act of 1890 had offered some supplementation of the Act of 1887.

⁴ Much anti-Gladstone speaking can be summed up conveniently in the following quotation from Chamberlain (at Sunderland, October 31st, 1891): "The rulers of more than one great European power are beginning to look forward with hope and anticipation—and beginning to believe that they will be able to obtain from our weakness concessions which they know they cannot secure from their own strength. I have been in Egypt . . . I do not believe that the majority of my countrymen have any conception of the good work which has been performed by a few Englishmen in that country. . . ."

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mainly of the landlords, to the bulk of the population of the countryside.

The rural part of the "Newcastle Programme" therefore plainly deserves close attention. First it demanded that the "condition of the rural population should receive the immediate attention of Parliament". Then it went on to define the principles of "primary importance" on which Parliamentary action should be based and, in these, it was obviously the farm labourer who was mainly in view. Parliament, it was affirmed, should be asked for:¹

- (a) The establishment of District and Parish Councils popularly elected.
- (b) The concession of compulsory powers to local authorities to acquire and hold lands for allotments, small holdings, village halls, places of worship, labourers' dwellings² and other purposes.
- (c) The reform of existing Allotment Acts³ by the removal of existing restrictions, by giving security of tenure and the right to erect buildings, and the right of full compensation for all improvements.

¹ *Northern Echo*, October 3rd.

² It is very difficult nowadays to appreciate the electoral importance of some of the issues here raised. The Conservatives, for example, in an effort to allay labourer-discontent had, after a failure with an even smaller scheme for allotments limited to a maximum area of half an acre, consented to pass the Allotment Act of 1887. Under this Act the "sanitary authorities" had been empowered, *if satisfied there was a demand for allotments*, to acquire land for the purpose on the request of six ratepayers or electors. Now the "sanitary authorities"—the Local Boards in urban districts and the Guardians in rural districts—were subject to "property qualifications" and were property-weighted in other ways, notably by the plural voting system used in their election which graded voting-power on a scale from one to twelve. That explains why "popularly elected" Councils were demanded in their stead and suggests also why most "sanitary authorities", dominated by farmers anxious to keep labourers "in their place" and tradesmen fearful of raising the rates, showed no enthusiasm to use their new allotment powers. Even those authorities who made a real attempt to do something were apt to find that, without compulsory powers, the land they could get for allotments was either too far from the village for convenience or, if near enough, was priced too high.

The mention of Small Holdings in the "Newcastle Programme" promised something bigger than mere allotments; reference to "village halls and labourers' dwellings" opened even brighter vistas; while "places of worship" owed their specific inclusion to the difficulties experienced by such Dissenting sects as the Primitive Methodists in obtaining suitable land for chapel sites from the more pugnacious type of Tory landowner. Occasional "scandals" with site-refusing Tories often helped rural Radicalism.

³ There had been a second Allotment Act in 1890 authorising appeals to County Councils against sanitary authorities not making proper use of their discretionary allotment powers under the Allotment Act of 1887. Yet this had hardly proved effective and, besides, did nothing to remove such "restrictions" as those confining the total area rentable by one man as an allotment or allotments to a maximum of one acre, limiting the buildings or sheds placeable on the allotment, etc., etc.

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But even farmers were catered for in the much-discussed "omnibus" resolution in which were bundled together all the subjects not dealt with in other pronouncements during the Newcastle proceedings. Here is the list of demands made in the "omnibus" resolution to give an idea of what the "Newcastle Programme" included besides Home Rule, "registration reform",¹ "one man, one vote",² payment of members, simultaneous polling throughout the country at General Elections,³ Welsh Disestablishment and the rest:⁴

A thorough reform of the land laws such as will secure

(a) The repeal of the laws of primogeniture and entail.

(b) Freedom of sale and transfer.

(c) A just taxation of land values and ground rents.

¹ "Registration Reform" was to be a feature of Radical programmes for a long time yet and, in fact Samuel Storey, the Radical M.P. for Sunderland who seconded the resolution that put it into the "Newcastle Programme" said, amid applause, that he would have preferred "Manhood Suffrage". "Manhood Suffrage" would certainly have enfranchised many hundreds of thousands who failed, for various reasons, to qualify as householders or lodgers under the existing system. One major cause of the excessive working-class disfranchisement was what was called "removal disqualification". A working-class householder, moving from one borough to another or from one county division to another, subjected himself thereby to anything from 1½ to 2½ years of disqualification under the cumbersome system of preparing the voters' registers that made everything turn on claims made to the overseer before a given date in July and after there had been a year of residence. The "Newcastle Programme" called for a "reduction of the qualifying period to three months" and for the appointment of "responsible registration officers" to take over the preparation of the registers of voters as a professional task.

² The abolition of "plural voting" was to be another Radical demand with a long future and, in fact, the grievance to which it bears testimony subsisted until 1918. At Birmingham on January 29, 1885, Mr. Chamberlain had attacked the system which gave wealthy people with residences or property in several constituencies usable votes for them all in the following terms: "I will take my own case, I am a terrible example. I have three votes in as many borough constituencies, and I have three votes for as many county constituencies. That is to say I have six votes. I use them on the right side, but I know many of my friends who have ten or twelve and I have heard of one reverend pluralist who has twenty-three."

³ Under the existing system Returning Officers in Boroughs were only bound by the stipulation that the election must take place within nine days after the receipt of the writ; while in the Counties the period could be prolonged to seventeen days. The system lent itself to abuse in two ways. Boroughs in the firm control of one party sometimes sought to influence the voting of the rest of the country by a very early poll whose result might affect sentiment elsewhere. Again, the polling day might be chosen not for external reasons but for reasons confined to the town, and there were often suspicions that one day rather than another was chosen because it was likely to reduce the weight of the working-class vote. (Cf. Sydney Buxton's *Political Questions of the Day*, 8th ed. 1892, pp. 141-4, for the *pros* and *cons* of the question.)

⁴ Shorter Parliaments and the putting of polling costs upon the rates instead of upon the candidates may be mentioned here.

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(d) Compensation to town and country tenants for both disturbance and improvement, together with a simplified process for obtaining such compensation.

(e) The enfranchisement of leaseholds.

The direct popular veto on the liquor traffic.

Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Established Church in Scotland.

The equalisation of Death Duties upon real and personal property.¹

The just division of rates between owner and occupier.

The taxation of Mining Royalties.

A free Breakfast Table.²

The extension of the Factory Acts and

The Ending or Mending of the House of Lords.

It is difficult to decide what influence the "Newcastle Programme" had on the electoral position. Perhaps the most reasonable conclusion is that though the Gladstonian Front Bench lost heavily, in the long run, from its inability, for a variety of reasons, to enact the major part of the programme during its years of office between 1892 and 1895, the programme's short-term effect was to help the Opposition's immediate electoral chances. Two other events of October 1891 must have aided the Opposition considerably. The death of the mild and inoffensive W. H. Smith, Salisbury's Leader of the Commons since January 1887, enforced the substitution of Salisbury's nephew, A. J. Balfour, who, if much abler, was also much more unpopular as the "Bloody Balfour" of Mitchelstown and Irish Coercion generally. The simultaneous death of the unfortunate Parnell, exhausted by his furious but unsuccessful struggle to maintain his leadership of Nationalist Ireland, must have also told rather for than against the Opposition. Even the most obstinate Conservative sections of the country were reminded by the obituary notices that the "Irish Question" could not for ever be disposed of by petty taunts on the "Divorce scandal".³ Besides, the fair prospect that seemed to open up of a speedy reunion of Parnellites and anti-Parnellites threatened the end of yet another useful Conservative cry—the cry that the

¹ This was effected before long in Harcourt's "Radical" Budget of 1894. The precise character of the Radical grievance is explained in the pages dealing with this Budget.

² An old Radical and "Financial Reform" aspiration involving the end of the tea, cocoa, coffee and chicory duties.

³ The death of Smith and Parnell took place on October 6th. For days and even for weeks afterwards the Press not only of England but of the world was busy with discussions of the possible consequences.

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Nationalist politicians were fighting among themselves like Kilkenny cats.

Even the death of Lord Hartington's father, the Duke of Devonshire in December 1891, had its electoral importance.¹ Hartington's ascent to the House of Lords enforced the nomination of Chamberlain to the leadership of the Liberal-Unionist group in the Commons. But whereas Hartington was a respected figure, liked rather than disliked by his political opponents, "Judas" Chamberlain, now "hobnobbing" with duchesses² and the "gentlemen of England" after having "betrayed his Master", was the most infuriating personality in politics to large sections of the electorate.³

Certainly, two sensational by-election results, one late in 1891 and the other early in 1892, seemed to prove that Opposition prospects of General Election success were as bright as they had ever been. Thus, in the by-election at South Molton, Devonshire, there had been a remarkable turnover of votes from Liberal-Unionism to the Opposition, and a Liberal-Unionist majority of 1,689 was converted into a Gladstonian majority of 1,212. In the Rossendale Division of Lancashire, too, the seat vacated by the departure of Hartington, the Liberal-Unionist leader, for the Lords, a Gladstonian turned the Liberal-Unionist majority of

¹ The Duke's death occurred on December 21st.

² Cf. *Northern Echo*, July 9, 1891, for the type of news about Chamberlain that Radicals liked to regale themselves with. Under the heading of "Mr. Chamberlain and the Duchesses" the Darlington paper quoted the following from Labouchere's *Truth*, Labouchere having long constituted himself Chamberlain-baiter-in-chief: "On Thursday last the House of Commons was almost deserted. It was announced that Mr. Chamberlain was receiving duchesses on the terrace, and down went most of the members to see the reception. There he sat at the head of a long table dispensing tea and muffins to these dames who ministered to him much as, in their turn, clerical devotees treat the curate at a tea-party. The most amusing part of the performance was when a lady approached the Duchess of Teck, and made a low curtsy. Having done this, she turned round and made a still lower curtsy to Mr. Chamberlain, imagining him to be a German Emperor or something of that sort. . . ."

³ Cf. *Reynolds's*, November 11, 1888, for the platform style of attack on Chamberlain, hugely relished by the "masses" on the Gladstonian side: "Mr. Labouchere, at a meeting at Bradford, had some strong things to say about Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's desertion from the Liberal party. Mr. Chamberlain had thrown over his old colleagues because the Radicals would not help him to supplant Mr. Gladstone; he had been actuated by hatred and envy, declared Mr. Labouchere. Mr. Chamberlain had been called Judas. He did not approve of historical comparisons; they were seldom exact. Judas had some good about him. He betrayed his Master, but he did not afterwards stump Judea, dine with Herod, sup with Caiaphas, sing the praises of Pilate, appear on platforms surrounded by Scribes and Pharisees, and then declare that he alone of the Apostles was a true Christian."

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1,450 into an Opposition majority of 1,225.¹ It was plain that the Salisbury Government has no other course open but to stage an 1892 Session and go on waiting for the least unfavourable moment for Dissolution. Meanwhile it was no such bad strategy that Parliament, reassembled on February 9, 1892, should be offered a legislative programme containing Local Government and National Education Bills for Ireland and, for Britain, a Small Holdings Bill to supplement the mere Allotment Acts of 1887 and 1890. New "benefits" of a real and solid character were, it could be claimed, again offered to the country by Ministers, who despite their special care for Britain's Navy, Empire and Foreign Policy, had a wonderful record in honest social improvement at home.

¹ Cf. H. W. Lucy, *A Diary of the Salisbury Parliament, 1886-1892*, under February 9, 1892, for the welcome given to the new recruits at the beginning of the 1892 Session: "Immediately after came Mr. Lambert, who carried the Liberal flag triumphantly through South Molton. At his appearance the Opposition . . . gave a rousing cheer, prolonged the full length of his passage up to the table. That was pretty well to begin with, but it was nothing to what followed on the appearance of Mr. Maden, Lord Hartington's successor in the representation of Rossendale. Mr. Maden was not only cheered up to the table . . . but was cheered all the while the clerk, in dumb show, administered the oath to him; again while he was signing the roll; and a third time, with growing enthusiasm, when he was introduced to the Speaker." The Opposition was plainly very confident.

CHAPTER VII

MR. GLADSTONE RETURNS TO DOWNING STREET

“The party, that we think is beaten in argument, and which as we know for the last five years wherever there was a vacancy has been beaten at the polls has now fallen back on the weapon of intimidation. They tell us that there is a certain portion of Ireland called Ulster, for which they constitute themselves the spokesmen—and I utterly deny their title to so speak—and I say that he who imputes to Ulster an intention or likelihood of its rebelling against the law of the country, proceeding from the supreme fountain-head of the Imperial Parliament, that man, be he who he may, is a calumniator of Ulster. . . . Lord Salisbury has said, to put it into plain terms—I am not using his exact words—that if a Home Rule measure be passed by Parliament, and if the Parliament of Ireland proceeds to make laws under the authority and with the express sanction of the Imperial Parliament in London—just as the Parliaments of Canada and Australia are making laws with the same sanction and under the same authority—Lord Salisbury has said that in that case he thinks that Ulster would rebel, and he intimates no disapproval, to say the least of it, of the rebellion. No disapproval? I put the case moderately. . . .”

Gladstone hits out with apparently undiminished vigour,
May 31, 1892.

“The Unionist party, Mr. Balfour maintained, had been the pioneers in every branch of social reform. In legislation about the hours of labour, about the relations of capital and labour, reform of the land laws, encouragement of peasant owners in Ireland, in England, and in Scotland, freeing of education, housing of the working classes, development of backward parts of the country—subjects covering by far the largest portion of social reform up to the present time—the Unionists had been either the pioneers or those who had done the most and best of the work. The zeal for social reform in the Gladstonian party was of too recent growth to command much confidence. It followed too closely upon the alteration of the franchise, and had too near a bearing on the acquisition of votes. The Unionists had remaining over from the great work they had done in the last six years great problems which required their final legislative solution. For Ireland there was the Irish

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Local Government Bill. That measure was met at its inception 'by a howl of stupid invective. . . .'"

The Leader of the Commons shows how to make a virtue of necessity in his pre-election speech of June 15, 1892.

"In this election the Liberals captured four seats in our part, my own and three others. . . . I was returned by a majority of 1,089. The Tories were completely staggered by it. In 1885 several of the local gentry lent me horses and carriages to take voters to the poll . . . but in 1892 they would not lend me a wheel . . . because I voted for Home Rule. . . . A pressman came to interview me just after the election and I told him what I thought. I said: ' . . . neither the Tory Allotments Act (1887) nor the Small Holdings Acts are of much, if any, good to the labourers. . . . After the Irish question is got out of the way we must have Parish Councils. By conferring upon these councils the control of the charities, and the administration of the Poor Law, many of the abuses at present existing will be disposed of. These councils, too, must take over the matters of rating and education in the villages. Then, above all, they must have the power to compulsorily acquire as much land for the labourer as he wants at the same rent as land is letting in the district. . . . I was strong on the point that the meetings must be held in the evenings so that the men could attend, otherwise parson and squire would manipulate them . . . '"

Joseph Arch, M.P., and ex-labourer, on his return for N.W. Norfolk, July 1892.

TO an attentive observer of English political development, the year 1892 has some significance. Imperialist sentiment was already beginning to mount high in important sections of the community thanks to Kiplingesque interpretations of the British position in India¹ and Egypt, and a growing racial pride in "British civilising achievements all over the globe". Yet the "Newcastle Programme" is proof enough that the course of British politics was not lightly to be deflected from its path towards "one man, one vote" democracy at home. Events in 1891 had, in fact, once again caused grave disquiet to the Royal Family. Queen Victoria, indeed, rescued by Gladstone from the worst effects of the Royal Grants controversy of 1889, was now, thanks to her age and half a century of Press adulation, well on the way to an unchallenged pedestal as the Empire's universal grandmother. But Republican sentiment had risen, none the less dangerously, against the Prince of Wales when the "Tranby Croft scandal" at last gave the long-hoodwinked public the chance to see the Prince as he really was.

"Society", of course, had long known of the manner in which the Prince of Wales lived and amused himself—and the rest of the country had greedily swallowed the rumours that occasionally descended "below stairs". But so long as the Press maintained a conspiracy of silence, so long as the illustrated papers unremittingly pictured him as the Queen's dutiful son, the Princess's devoted husband and the nation's diligent hospital-opener-in-chief, no definite evidence against the Prince was available. But the "Tranby Croft scandal" got to court, and a flood of printed

¹ Cf. Amy Cruse, *After the Victorians*, pp. 114-17: "In the late 'eighties there had begun to arrive in England from India a series of little books written by a young man twenty-three years old (b. 1865) whose name was Rudyard Kipling. Justin McCarthy tells how, by chance, he took up one of these books . . . and soon became fascinated. Sidney Low came across some of these books towards the end of 1889, and at once his interest and curiosity were aroused. 'I spent an afternoon reading *Soldiers Three*', he says, 'and when I went out to a dinner-party that evening I could talk of nothing but this marvellous writer'.

"Kipling came to England . . . and one morning in February 1890 there arrived at the office of the *National Observer* a selection of poems called the *Barrack Room Ballads*. Long before the Ballads were published in collected form in 1892, dozens of young people knew most of them by heart. . . . As one story after another came with its message from overseas, as one ballad after another sang itself into the public consciousness and men went about their work to the rhythms of *Mandalay* and *Gunga Din* an interest in their kinsfolk who were living and toiling in the far-off lands that England had won for her own began to awake in those who had never thought much before about the Empire. . . ."

Mr. Gladstone returns to Downing Street

information and spoken gossip was let loose which visibly rocked the Throne.¹ Here is a typical piece of Radical comment on the case put forward in the Prince's defence:²

Mr. Stead, in this month's *Review of Reviews*, takes under his protection no less a personage than the Prince of Wales and makes on authority . . . statements which are meant to place the Prince before the world in a more pleasant light than has befallen him since the baccarat scandal.

It seems that the Prince did not commit the offence against good manners of compelling an unwilling host to allow baccarat to be played under his roof. . . . Again it was not through the Prince that the secret of the scandal was betrayed. With reference to the counters Mr. Stead has an ingenious plea. The carrying by the Prince of counters about with him is almost an act of merit. The glitter of the gold at Monte Carlo constitutes, according to Mr. Stead, the fatal fascination of the tables there . . . so . . . "by bringing with him the plain unromantic counter as a substitute for gold and notes the Prince did what he could to render the game with which he amused himself as innocent as possible for the inexperienced onlooker!" Mr. Stead forgets here that counters might have been procured without the Heir to the Throne carrying them about the country, and that those who play with counters play on credit, and may thus be tempted to go further than they can afford. The stories of the Prince's obligations to shady Israelites, of his appeals to the Queen for financial help, and contemplated application to Parliament are all categorically denied on authority. . . .

Our readers may judge for themselves of the value of this inspired apology for the Prince of Wales. . . . There are courtier folk who would have us believe that the Prince of Wales is one of the hardest-worked men in the kingdom. We never heard of His Highness suffering from

¹ Cf. André Maurois, *King Edward*, pp. 73-4: "His life in the Paris of the Second Empire had been a fruitful field of scandal. . . . For a few years his typhoid (1871) had inoculated him against ill-will, but then rumours began to pullulate again. In 1891 the country was staggered by a petty baccarat squabble. In the course of a game played in a private house, Tranby Croft, one of the Prince's partners was accused of cheating, and compelled . . . to sign an admission of guilt in return for a promise of silence. But despite the pledges the story was repeated, and the accused became accuser, bringing an action for slander. The Prince was called as a witness. The whole of puritan England fell on him.

"What! In thousands of churches, twice every Sunday, for half a century, devout prayers had been offered up for Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, and the response to these millions of prayers was—the Tranby Croft scandal! A Wesleyan preacher in Leeds declared that the public was entitled to insist that the heir-apparent to the throne should obey the laws which he required his subjects to respect. The Methodist ministry, in full conference, adopted a resolution calling upon a prince who aspired to the Kingship of a Christian people to forswear such practices. At Northampton a farmer spoke to W. T. Stead. 'Look here,' he said, 'I hope you will make it plain that such as he will never be allowed to sit on the throne. We don't want any gamblers to reign over us.'"

² *Northern Echo*, July 13th.

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overwork: but according to Mr. Stead, he does suffer from the "soul-deadening routine" of his life, and is fairly bored into the questionable amusements in which he spends his leisure. The particular employment from which the Prince sought relief in baccarat was that of attending Doncaster Races.

After reading such an extract it becomes clearer why that very important journalist, Mr. Frederick Greenwood, told the readers of the *Illustrated London News* that the principal danger to the Royal Family came from within itself and advised prompt marriage for one of the Prince of Wales's sons.¹

Press "discretion", however, can do wonders in a relatively short space of time and when, in addition, personal sympathy for the Royal Family was aroused by the sudden death of the Prince of Wales's firstborn² at the early age of twenty-eight (January 14, 1892), most of the effects of the "Tranby Croft scandal" passed harmlessly away. In a community like that of Great Britain where the bulk of the singularly powerful aristocratic and plutocratic elements were concerned to shelter the Throne, it needed almost inconceivable folly or levity on the part of the Royal Family to breed Republicanism, at least in a time of peace and relative "prosperity". Truth to tell, the growing Imperialism of the day brought a valuable new buttress for Monarchy in the shape of the plausible argument that the best way to precipitate a break-up of the Empire would be to set up a President in England to whom the self-governing Colonies owed no traditional allegiance. Nay, the fact that the plutocracy of the colonies, and even of Republican America, could be represented as captivated by the elegance and distinction of London "Society", headed by the Prince of Wales, was, before long, to be used as a serious new argument for the maintenance of a "splendid Court" in England.

It is certainly time to return to the party preparations for the 1892 Session and for the General Election that might at any time cut short that Session's course. Schnadhorst, the great Gladstonian

¹ *Illustrated London News*, June 6th. After using the argument that a strong reason against Republicanism was the inability of a President to hold the Empire linked together like a monarch, Mr. Greenwood concluded: "it becomes a matter of profound importance that the Royal Family should guard against every accident, near or remote, which might be provocative of popular discontent or lowering to the dignity of the Crown. No circumspection can be too wide or too minute, no care excessive." One of the reasons why he advised a prompt marriage for one of the Prince of Wales's sons was that he considered the monarchical principle could no longer stand the strain, say, of the succession of the Duchess of Fife or of any child of the Duke of Fife.

² Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence.

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organiser, had apparently decided that the "Newcastle Programme's" special bid for the rural vote needed supplementation by something big, picturesque and personal enough to appeal to the whole electorate.¹ The device of a "rural conference" was finally hit upon in which four hundred delegates, mainly labourers, assembled from all over the country under the benevolent aegis of the National Liberal Federation, should state their own grievances,² suggest their own remedies³ and be given a final

¹ Cf. *Annual Register*, 1891, English History, p. 223. "There had been a growing feeling among the leaders of the Liberal party that it might not be prudent to trust exclusively to 'Home Rule for Ireland'. . . . The Newcastle programme had shown the various drifts and currents of opinion among the party, and each in turn had received the formal endorsement of the party leader. But when the congress separated considerable doubt remained which plank of the platform would best serve to make the Tory coffin. Mr. Schnadhorst, the astute manager of the old Birmingham caucus, now promoted to be director of the Liberal executive, was credited with the idea of putting forward the claims of the rural labourer. Under Mr. Schnadhorst's advice and with his aid, a conference of villagers was therefore summoned to meet in London at the Memorial Hall (December 10th), and very great care was taken to make the meeting honestly representative of the rural districts, if not exclusively of the agricultural labouring class. Some four hundred delegates attended. . . . From the first it was evident that the Nonconformists largely predominated, and from the fluency in which many of the speakers expressed their animosity to the Church, it looked as if a certain number of the delegates had acquired their power by constant practice."

² *Ibid.*, pp. 223-4: "In nearly every case, however, these short speeches were to the point, showing dissatisfaction with the working of the existing allotment system and the desire for village or parish councils to acquire land forcibly, and to re-let it to the labourers cheaply. They were even more unanimous against the existing system of letting cottages which, at the will of the farmer, they lost when they lost their work or left his service: they wished for an extension of the system of outdoor relief and at the same time a reduction of the rates, and they were generally agreed as to the "tyranny" of the farmer, the squire and the parson, the last named being especially the object of their dislike on the ground of his "bossing" the village affairs.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 224: "As to parish councils the general view seemed to be in favour: (1) of grouping all but the larger parishes; (2) against giving the councils the control of the poor law; (3) for giving them control, (a) of the land, (b) of the school charities, on which the meeting was very strong; (4) for electing the councils by ballot and 'one man, one vote'; (5) for abolishing the vicar's official chairmanship of the vestry. On the land question there was practically one opinion. Only one speaker—a village postman—asked for land nationalisation, though several declared that the land must be for the people. On the other hand, the word peasant-proprietary was not used: nor apart from the speeches of a few freeholders was the thing asked for. The line of the speakers was clear. They wanted their three F's—first, the land at a fair rent; secondly, land and cottages with a fixed tenure: thirdly, compensation for improvements. . . . Speaker after speaker told the story of prohibitive rents—£2 10s. to £3 an acre: of attempts to confiscate improvements by resuming the land after the expiry of the leasing terms, of cruelly enhanced rents. The farmers joined equally in this cry. 'Good culture is penal: it is only bad culture that is lawful in England' was one sharp epigram in a much-applauded speech by a Cornish tenant-farmer. Equally strong was the demand for better cottages and an application of the Artisans' Dwellings Act to the rural districts."

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kindly blessing by Mr. Gladstone himself.¹ This "rural conference" of December 10 and 11, 1891, was an undoubted success, and it certainly played its part in the train of county-division electoral developments that began with the "sensational" Gladstonian by-election victory at Rossendale in January 1892 and ended with those important Gladstonian county-division gains, at the General Election of July 1892, which helped to put Salisbury out of power. Indeed, the sincerest tribute to the effectiveness of the Gladstonian "rural conference" of December 1891 is probably to be found in the Conservative endeavour to neutralise its results by calling another "rural conference" under Conservative auspices on January 29th.² But naturally a party like the Conservative, still largely resting on landlord support, was hardly free to compete with Gladstonians in offering the countryside all manner of advantages at landlords' expense.

Yet the Conservative determination to lay claim to all the merits of active and progressive legislators was amply enough illustrated in the Queen's Speech with which the 1892 Session was opened on February 9th. And separate amendments to the Address from Parnellites and Anti-Parnellites³ helped to keep Conservatives in heart by providing what seemed renewed confirmation for one of their favourite platform points—the fierce dissensions among the Irish Home Rulers themselves. That their ally, Chamberlain, should be occupying himself prominently with the study of Old Age Pension schemes, more "practical" if less generous than some already advocated,⁴ was regarded as another

¹ *Annual Register*, 1891, English History, p. 225, for "the warmth of his reception by the assembled delegates. . . . They found him willing to reduce (local government) election expenses: to divide the rates between landlord and tenant: to establish parish councils: and to compel landlords to give land for allotments. . . . Mr. Gladstone's clearest utterance was distinctly in favour of parish rather than of district councils, as being more competent to deal with labourers' allotments, to defend rights of way, to protect ancient charities, and to deal with expropriation for the benefit of the villagers."

² Cf. *Ibid.*, 1892, English History, p. 7.

³ Cf. *Hansard*, February 12th and 15th, for their rejection by 168-97 and 179-158 respectively.

⁴ Cf. *Annual Register*, 1891, English History, pp. 226-7: "Whilst the Gladstonians were bringing to the front the grievances of the rural labourers, and promising them all manner of benefits when restored to power, the Unionists, especially those who followed Mr. Chamberlain, were urging on the question of State pensions to the old and infirm of all classes of the labouring population. The question was not altogether a party one, for Mr. Chamberlain had been associated with several Radicals, Mr. W. A. Hunter, M.P., being the most conspicuous. . . . Mr. Booth's scheme was more far-reaching than any suggested by Mr. Chamberlain. He was sceptical that men would or could in many cases

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advantage by the Conservative strategists. If agricultural labourers saw some hope of ending their days as State pensioners in their own cottages instead of as paupers in the workhouse, their interest in Radical attacks on the shortcomings of the Conservative Sessional programme would be notably diminished.

The main items of this Sessional programme were given to Parliament and the country on February 18th, when Mr. Balfour introduced the Local Government (Ireland) Bill, and on February 22nd, when Mr. Chaplin introduced a Small Holdings Bill and the Irish Secretary an Irish Education Bill. Perhaps it would be well before examining the controversy that opened on this programme to dispose of some lesser but still very significant activities of the Session. On February 23rd the first big Division took place on a private member's motion for Welsh Disestablishment. In the circumstances the resulting vote of 220-267 was not unfavourable to the Opposition. Another important vote on a piece of "private member business" came next day when the Second Reading Division was taken on the Shop Hours Bill, promoted by the Gladstonian Provand, to limit the hours of women and young persons employed in shops. In view of the busy bids being made for the working-class vote by the Tories, who were claiming the main credit for Factory Legislation going back to 1802 and many miscellaneous "benefits conferred on the working classes" besides, including even the Trade Union Acts of 1824 and 1875, it did Opposition members no harm to be seen occupied with the legislative protection of a new class of labour, particularly liable to gross overwork.¹ And after the Second Reading of Mr. Provand's Bill was carried by 175 votes against 152, the Salisbury Government determined to allow a Shop Hours Act to the Statute

voluntarily tax themselves in the present for the hope of a remote annuity. He therefore proposed to abolish both out-door and in-door relief altogether, and at the age of sixty-five pay to every individual in England and Wales a pension of 5s. a week. This, he estimated, would cost in round numbers £17,000,000 from which £3,000,000 at present expended on the aged poor would have to be deducted, leaving a net cost of £14,000,000. To meet this he proposed an additional 8d. income tax or a 4d. income tax and a revival of the sugar duty, in order that the sum should be raised from the entire population and not exclusively from the well-to-do. . . . But the fundamental objection to Mr. Booth's scheme, and partially also to Mr. Chamberlain's, was that they taught the poor to rely less on their own thrift and industry and more and more upon State aid."

¹ It should, perhaps, be recalled at this stage that though the Labour Electoral Association of the T.U.C. "old guard" and the Liberal party organiser, Mr. Schnadhorst, understood one another very well, an irruption into the electoral field by a number of "independent Labour" candidates was certain. (Cf. W. Humphrey, *A History of Labour Representation*, pp. 122-9.)

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Book which limited the shop-assistant under eighteen to a maximum working-week of seventy-four hours including meal-times.¹ But as the special protection Provand had desired to give to adult women failed to find a place in the final Act, it must be assumed that some Tory candidates, at any rate, found it harder to take up the pose of the working-class's best friends.

It might be convenient here to finish the reckoning of Sessional demonstrations of importance made off the main party battle-fields. On March 22nd the Gladstonian member, Robertson, urged in a private member's motion the oppressive character of the existing Common Law Doctrine of Conspiracy but, despite the anxiety of the Trade Unions to have something done, he was defeated by 226 votes against 180.² On March 25th, a resolution for Payment of Members from the Gladstonian "Labour" M.P., Fenwick, was rejected by 227 votes against 162; on April 8th a Gladstonian resolution against the Septennial Act, which was maintaining the Salisbury Government in office, was defeated by 188 votes against 142; and, on May 18th, a Plural Voting Abolition Bill was lost in a division of 243-196 after Liberal-Unionists decided to vote with Conservatives until a "just" Redistribution Bill should be produced correcting Catholic Ireland's large over-representation.³ Finally, a Bill for the Disestablishment and

¹ There were, of course, the usual considerable exceptions. The Act did not apply to members of the shopkeeper's family, or to any person employed simply as a domestic servant, or to a shop where the only persons employed were members of the same family living on the premises. Fortunately there was the compensation of a fairly wide definition of "shop" which term was made to cover retail and wholesale shops, stands in markets, stalls, licensed public-houses and refreshment houses of any kind.

² The *T.U.C. Annual Report* for 1891 shows the anxiety that had been caused by some legal dicta from Courts provoked by the "New Unionism". The Parliamentary Committee had reported that: "During the past year several important judgements have been given in the Law Courts against Trade Unionists, under the Law of Conspiracy. With regard to the judgement of Mr. Bompas, the recorder of Plymouth, it is difficult to conceive a more foolish or absurd rendering of the law relating to strikes than that stated by him in the notorious case of *Curran v. Treleaven*. 'A strike', says Mr. Bompas, 'for the purpose of raising wages or altering the condition of employment is lawful, unless accompanied by violence or intimidation, but a strike for the purpose of compelling employers not to employ other persons, or to alter the terms of employment of such other persons is illegal.' Happily there has been obtained from a superior Court . . . a more rational and just interpretation of the law. . . ."

³ In view of the continuous decline in the population of Ireland since 1845 while that of Great Britain was as continuously increasing, Ireland, which had been greatly under-represented between 1801 and 1845, was by 1891 considerably over-represented. Indeed, opponents of Home Rule were ready to prove that a "just" Redistribution would deprive Nationalist Ireland of over 20 M.P.s.

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Disendowment of the Church of Scotland was rejected on May 24th by 265 votes against 209.

Meanwhile, the Government Small Holdings Bill was, in view of the struggle for the farm labourer's vote, causing some of the most interesting situations of the Session. Owing to damaging Radical criticisms of the pettiness and ineffectiveness of the Government's Allotment Acts of 1887 and 1890,¹ Ministers had now resolved to go so far as to authorise County Councils to buy or hire land for small holdings that might be as large as 50 acres and might even exceed that acreage so long as the annual value for income-tax purposes was not above £50. But the farm labourer had no great hope or expectation that the County Councils would use these Small Holding powers to any appreciable extent, unless elective Parish Councils were created, authorised, among other things, to summon the County Councils to act after the Parish authorities had ascertained local wishes and possibilities and drawn up a parochial plan. Accordingly, before the Government Small Holdings Bill went into Committee, a Radical instruction had to be disposed of for creating "popular elected" Parish Councils as part of the machinery for working the Bill. This attempt to carry a section of the "Newcastle Programme" by indirect means was defeated, on April 4th, in a division of 178-151 but, on April 8th, another important Radical amendment had to be faced by the Government. By this amendment the County Councils, as the Small Holdings authority, were not to be limited to voluntary agreement when seeking to hire or buy land for Small Holdings, but might apply compulsion in proper circumstances. This second Radical attempt to "improve the Bill" was defeated by 226 votes against 184—and the combined effect of these two rejections was to help Radical candidates for rural constituencies to claim that the Small Holdings Bill was intended for show and not for use. Indeed, in some county divisions, the full Parish Council and Small Holdings programme began to savour almost of rural communism with Parish Councils not only empowered to undertake formidable changes of land-tenure, but also to manage charities and education instead of the incumbent, Poor Relief instead of the Guardians, and assessment instead of the

¹ Under these Acts the maximum holding providable was one acre, and it was complained, only a pitiable number of these allotments had been provided because action had been left too much to the discretion of apathetic or even hostile "sanitary authorities".

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Overseers.¹ And that Salisbury should, by contrast, have been indulging in some heavy jocularities at the expense of the suggested Parish Councils, probably did his party no ultimate good at the polls.²

The Irish Education Act of 1892, though an important enough piece of legislation, was largely non-controversial and so can be disposed of quickly before the very controversial Irish Local Government Bill is examined. Roughly the Education Act may be said to have bestowed free elementary education on the Irish majority by the same method that had been employed in the English "Free Education" Act of 1891, that is, sufficient fee-grant was made available from the Treasury to replace the sums collected in the past as School Pence. Another feature of the Act was the rather half-hearted Compulsory Education that it ordained for the Irish urban population. Ignorant, perhaps, of the varied grounds which many Town Councils and Town Commissions would find for refusing to play their statutory part in the nomination of School Attendance Committees to enforce attendance through School Attendance Officers,³ Ministers even claimed to have provided hopefully for the further extension of Compulsory Education to rural Ireland. But, possibly, the grant to the Irish County Councils of the right to extend compulsion at discretion to county areas, or parts of them, was not wholly without its measure of political guile. The step might be made to look very "progressive" in England and Scotland while being almost inexecutable in Ireland. Besides, before the Irish Education Act was on the Statute Book, it had become certain that there would be no County Councils in Ireland for years to come. The Ministers' Irish Local Government Bill had caused such difficulties that it was widely believed that the Cabinet had never really

¹ Cf. Joseph Arch, *The Story of his Life*, p. 390, for the suggestions of the National Union of Agricultural Labourers.

² Cf. *The Times* of November 25, 1891, for a speech delivered the previous day at Birmingham which contained the much-resented sneer that if Parish Councils were being recommended in order to give some interest to rural life, "I should rather recommend a circus or something of that kind."

³ Cf. G. Balfour, *Educational Systems of Great Britain and Ireland*, pp. 112-13, for the fact that only 42 out of the 118 places to which compulsion was applied could be said in 1898 to have enforced it steadily. More than twenty authorities gave as their reason for openly flouting the Act, the unfairness of denying the grants provided for in the Act to Catholic schools operating outside the "National System". It should, perhaps, be added that the grants available under the Act were intended to confer on Ireland better salaries for teachers as well as "Free Education".

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expected to pass it, but had only sought to turn the inevitable Irish and Gladstonian "obstruction" into a favourable excuse for abandoning it and going to the country.

Despite several tactically clever "concessions" to the "spirit of progress",¹ the true character of the Irish Local Government Bill had been apparent from the very first. Even quarters favourable to the Government report the derisive Irish cheers, which greeted some of Mr. Balfour's introductory explanations of February 18th, and the complete astonishment which other parts of his speech brought upon the Gladstonian Front Bench.² The fact was that, over five-sixths of Ireland, no Conservative Government dared bestow, on representative bodies, any but the most guarded and restricted powers,³ with additional and most unusual precautions against "misuse" even of this fragmentary authority. And so, after hearing with amazement the almost fantastic limitations suggested for the new Irish local Councils which were, it would seem, to be confined largely to road-maintenance; after listening to Mr. Balfour's reasons for excluding, contrary to precedent, a large part of the Irish poor from local polls as "illiterate" while the voting weight of the rest of the majority was depressed as against the "minority" by the cumulative vote, members found cause for a last "burst of ironical cheering and laughter" that "swept the House"⁴ as they understood Mr. Balfour's final precautions. Even the normal routine of administrative procedure, adopted by the new authorities, could be indicted by any twenty

¹ Ireland, for example, was to have District Councils, or Barony Councils to use the Irish term, even before England, and the "undemocratic" introduction of non-elected "aldermen" into the County Councils, which had caused Radical complaint in the English case, was to be avoided. Yet if the second "concession", for instance, is examined it will be found to have its full measure of calculation for, it should be remembered, that what, in the English case, was expected to work in favour of "moderate men of experience" might, in the Irish case, well work the other way and allow County Council majorities to introduce "wild Fenians".

² Cf. *Annual Register*, 1892, English History, pp. 21-2.

³ Apart, of course, from total exclusion from the police power (though some concessions under this head had been made to the English County Councils) the Irish County Councils were left short of so many other powers as to be almost ludicrously helpless beside that mighty engine of "Ascendancy" control, the Irish Grand Jury, which, among other things, retained all its judicial and quasi-judicial authority as well as "all questions connected with compensation for malicious injury, murder and maiming". Even the lunatic asylums were not handed over to County Council control as in England, but new governing bodies were provided, half of whose members might be nominated by the County Councils.

⁴ *Annual Register*, 1892, English History, p. 22, for these descriptions. *Hansard*, February 18th, for Mr. Balfour's speech.

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cess-payers before a Judge on allegations of "persistent disobedience to the law or corruption or malversation or oppression",¹ and if found guilty an elected Council could be removed and replaced by a nominated one. And because the poorer Irish voter had more to gain than to lose from a policy, say, of extravagant road expenditure,² by the new Councils, still another check had been devised for them. A Joint Committee of fifteen, seven chosen by the County Council, seven chosen by the Grand Jury, and with the High Sheriff sitting *ex officio*, a Joint Committee, in short, in which "troublesome elements" from the County Council could be permanently out-voted, had to authorise all important types of expenditure before they could be undertaken.

It seems clear from the harm inflicted on the Irish Local Government Bill by the obvious criticisms open to the Opposition that, if Ministers had been free to choose, they would have done better to deal with Irish Local Government after the General Election rather than before. But Ministers were not really free to choose. For one thing, they had been indubitably, if most inconveniently, committed to granting Irish County Councils simultaneously with British, and the commitment dated as far back as 1886 when Lord Randolph Churchill had insisted on it. As the legislation establishing English County Councils was carried in 1888, Ministers were already very late with the fulfilment of a most specific pledge and could hardly go to the country before attempting to honour their word. Mr. Chamberlain was even more deeply committed than the Government. Accordingly, it seemed best to prepare a Bill and to ascribe all its departures from the pure democratic creed to the necessities of an Irish situation, temporarily dominated by unscrupulous Nationalists with little surviving credit other than that lent them by their alliance with a reckless Opposition, avid for power.

The rather unpromising reception given to the Irish Local Government proposals on February 18th may have caused considerable alterations in the Cabinet's plans. Certainly, the Local

¹ "Oppression" as a vague term, undefined by the law, was especially attacked when the Opposition came to have its say.

² The *Annual Register*, 1892, summarises this portion of the speech thus: "The great mass of the small occupiers in Ireland contributed as little as in some cases fourpence each to the county cess, and had no adequate motive for economy in the administration of the county funds. If they could induce the County Council to start roads or new works of any sort, they would often gain infinitely more than they could ever hope to gain from the most economical administration. . . ."

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Government Bill was held back for a considerable time while other Cabinet measures were pushed forward as rapidly as possible, in order to clear the way for a summer General Election. Meanwhile, big Conservative efforts were made to bring the country to a high pitch of alarm as to the grave consequences that would follow if Gladstone returned to power, committed to Home Rule. The position of Protestant Ulster occupied, of course, a very prominent part in the Conservative propaganda, and every device was employed to convince a still doubtful England that Ulster would fight rather than accept subjugation to Irish Nationalist authority under a Home Rule Bill. And it was no less a personage than the Prime Minister himself who went a stage further on May 6th, when addressing a Grand Demonstration of the Primrose League, on Irish Protestant objections to being placed at the mercy of Nationalist politicians and the Catholic hierarchy. After denying that Parliament's right to govern the people of Ulster could be stretched into "a right to sell them into slavery", Lord Salisbury went on to an even graver passage on the possible consequences of attempting to use the Army against the people of Ulster. There were hints of the most dangerous constitutional and military crisis since the Revolution in his prophecy "that any attempt on the part of any Government to perpetrate such an outrage as this (the use of the army against Ulster) would rend society in two".¹

Despite the obvious objections urgeable against what a Prime Minister had here ventured to do, there can be no doubt but that Salisbury's action considerably helped the Government when, on May 19th, the long-delayed Second Reading debates on the Irish Local Government Bill began in the House of Commons.² The area of discussion had been enlarged well beyond the mere question

¹ Cf. S. H. Jeyes, *Life and Times of the Marquis of Salisbury*, iv, 193-4. Salisbury also jeered at the "orthodox Liberal lips" which were now preaching "unrestricted passive obedience" to Ulster. He was a Tory, he claimed, but could accept neither the right of King or Parliament to unlimited obedience. The title of Kings and Parliaments to obedience was that they should observe the fundamental laws and the fundamental understandings of the compact by which they governed. Ulstermen had resisted James II and he believed that they had not lost their love of freedom or their detestation of arbitrary power.

² *Hansard*, May 19th, for the motion for rejection from the Irish party orator, Mr. Sexton. On May 23rd the more acid Irish orator, Timothy Healy, may be found urging, after flouts at Mr. Chamberlain and the Bill, some "practical" objections—the absence from the Bill of provision for just what Ireland needed—better agriculture, a scheme for providing better breeds of cattle and poultry, better drainage of land, better housing of labourers, the encouragement of gardening, a better system of education, and so on.

of whether or not the Bill's proposals tallied exactly with democratic principles, and this certainly seems to have been of use to the Ministers. A summary of Mr. Gladstone's speech and Mr. Balfour's reply, on May 24th, before the Second Reading Division was taken, would illustrate this well. Here are quotations from the *Annual Register's* useful abstract:¹

Mr. Gladstone (Midlothian) intervened in the debate when it was nearing its conclusion. He said he felt reluctance in opposing an important Government Bill—he would rather do what he could to improve their measures. . . . He reproached the Government, and especially reproached the Duke of Devonshire, Mr. Chamberlain and their Unionist supporters with having proved false to the pledges they had given that they would do for Ireland something much more important than this "miserable Bill", and he reminded them of what they had hinted at in the way of "provincial assemblies", "a radical reconstitution of the whole Irish administration" and even "a large devolution of national powers to an Irish Assembly"—he deplored the fact that the Local Government Bill, which stamped Ireland all through with inequality and inferiority, was the sole outcome of all the great promises which had been made, and then, speaking in his most solemn tone, he attacked Lord Salisbury for having threatened the Irish people that if they would not accept his Bill, and prosecuted the objects nearest to their hearts instead, they would do so at "the certain expense of civil war" to which the Prime Minister held language of "distinct encouragement". It was impossible, Mr. Gladstone contended, to conceive a more perfect contempt of political principle or of practical wisdom and sagacity than the Prime Minister had shown in this declaration, and he challenged the Premier's colleagues to say whether, if a Parliament were established by law in Ireland, they would support and in case of need enforce, that law against disobedience. The right hon. gentleman then went into an examination of the provisions of the Bill, and declared that the Government appeared to have gone here, there and everywhere to find precedents . . . and wherever they found a bad one they put it in the Bill, and wherever they found a good one they passed it over.

Mr. Balfour (replying) said it would be "a great act of public immorality to place Ulster under the heel of the rest of Ireland, that the attempt to do so would probably be resisted by force, and that if Ulster did resist, and an attempt were made to put down that resistance by means of a British standing army, then an outrage would be perpetrated which would rend society in two". There was more vehement cheering when Mr. Balfour "took note of the fact" that Mr. Gladstone contemplated the possibility that Ulster would have to be coerced, and though the right honourable gentleman at once interrupted to indignantly deny that he had said anything of the sort, Mr. Balfour retorted, amid fresh

¹ *Annual Register*, 1892, English History, pp. 58-9.

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cheers, that if he had not contemplated such a thing, there was no need for his "fury of righteous indignation".

But quite apart from the success of Mr. Balfour's retorts¹ and the tempestuous cheering that greeted them, the Division List seems to make it plain that Ministers had done better with their Irish Local Government Bill than seemed possible at the time of its introduction on February 18th. In fact, after so successful a vote as 339-247, there may have been doubts as to whether a quick Dissolution, involving the loss of the time already spent on Irish Local Government, was as justifiable as before.² But from the tactical point of view Ministers were undoubtedly wise in not exposing the re-awakened fighting spirit of their followers to the checks and crosses of the Committee and Report stages of a difficult Bill. Dissolution preparations were pressed on; the Ulster theme was repeated, in many variations, both by Conservatives and Liberal-Unionists;³ and much was made of the "great" social and "progressive" record of the Government since 1886. Nor was this all, for in addition to loud commendation of Ministers' County Council Acts, Allotment and Small Holdings Acts, Mines and Truck Acts and, of course, their three "Free Education" Acts, a great deal was said in praise of the Government's successful foreign and colonial policy. And how the blame for a Dissolution, bound in some degree to affect "business", might be thrown upon the Opposition was shown by Mr. Balfour when addressing the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations on June 15th. After condemning the "howl of stupid invective"

¹ Though Gladstone's speech was a remarkable one (Cf. Morley's *Gladstone*, ii, 547, for high praise of its "great power and splendour") Balfour forced him into giving a second display that even his magnificent powers were at last beginning to fail. Besides the somewhat unwarranted interruption already noted above, Gladstone made another when Balfour claimed that there were precedents in Gladstone's own Bills for the replacement of a peccant elected authority by a nominated one. Though Gladstone hotly denied this, the text of the Education Act of 1870 gave Balfour some justification.

² Garvin's *Chamberlain*, ii, 538-9, shows that Chamberlain, who was deeply committed, favoured proceeding with the Bill after so excellent a vote. But he bowed to the Conservative view that harm rather than good would result.

³ Cf. *The Times*, June 18th, for the meeting of a Great Ulster Convention on the previous day which it was hoped would capture the sympathy of England and Scotland for the Irish Protestants. For an example of typical pro-Ulster speaking at this stage, a quotation from Chamberlain's speech of June 7th at Birmingham would serve. "The men of Ulster", declared Mr. Chamberlain, "were not easily led into excitement, rebellion, or resistance by force. But believe me if these men take up the sword they will not lay it down till they have accomplished their objects."

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with which his opponents had greeted the Irish Local Government Bill, Mr. Balfour went on to allege that:¹

The Opposition not content with opposing it in the House of Commons proclaimed on every platform that there was no form of the House which they would not use in order to defeat its progress, and the spirit of Mr. Gladstone's attack upon the Bill showed conclusively that even the majority of ninety-two in its favour was not sufficient to enable the Government in the time they could possibly have at their disposal to make the measure law. . . .

All the Conservative efforts, however, did not yield a majority. Thanks to the "Newcastle Programme" London saw a heavy number of Conservative losses to Radicalism;² the English County Divisions saw similar Conservative and Liberal-Unionist reverses, serious in extent;³ and the English boroughs, bitterly though they disappointed the Gladstonian organisers,⁴ also added slightly to the sum of Conservative loss. Then Wales and Scotland, if not Ireland, succeeded in becoming more Radical still.⁵ The final figures, though not yielding Gladstone the Parliamentary majority of 100 for which he had hoped, did promise a House of Commons that would eject the Conservative Government by a majority of 40. It was, in fact, by a vote of 350 against 310 that the new House, assembled almost to a man, declared "no confidence" in the Salisbury Government on August 11th. The mover had been Mr. Asquith. The result was Salisbury's resignation and the construction of a fourth Gladstone Cabinet.

Mr. Gladstone had intervened in the debate which was to take

¹ *Annual Register*, 1892, English History, p. 95.

² Including Central Finsbury, Walworth, Newington West, Lambeth North, Kensington North, St. George's-in-the-East, Bow, Limehouse and Bermondsey. The two gains in West Ham from Conservatism should, perhaps, also rank to the credit of metropolitan Radicalism.

³ In Lancashire, the Liberals gained 5 seats; in Yorkshire 4; in Norfolk 3; in Lincolnshire, Devon, Somerset, Wiltshire and Durham 2 each, and so on.

⁴ Apart from the deep disappointment of the complete failure in all 7 Birmingham seats, the repulse of the attack on the 7 Liverpool seats held by Conservatives was as disquieting as the similar failures at Blackburn, Bolton, Bury, Ipswich, etc. But 2 gains at Devonport, 2 at Oldham, 2 at Portsmouth, and 1 each at Salford, Peterborough, Durham City and Stafford help to explain the part of the boroughs in the change of Government.

⁵ Wales sent 31 Gladstonians out of 34 and Scotland 50 out of 72 (though two seats in Glasgow had failed to swell the Gladstonian total owing to splits between Liberal and "Labour"). In Ireland, contention between Parnellites and Anti-Parnellites allowed a determined "Unionist" effort to capture West Belfast, Dublin Co. South, Fermanagh North, Londonderry City, Tyrone South and St. Stephen's Green, Dublin. This brought the Nationalist total, Parnellite and Anti-Parnellite, down to 81 out of 103.

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him to his fourth Prime Ministership with another of the remarkable speeches that all who heard considered well-nigh miraculous to come from a man of eighty-two. Firmly meeting the attempts already being made to deny the small and variegated majority collected behind him any moral authority to undertake Radical changes, he asserted unflinchingly that the policies proclaimed by the Opposition during the last Parliament had now been put before the country which had authorised legislation.

"We tried," he said,¹ "to obtain the appointment of District Councils, the appointment of Parish Councils, the placing of the police under the County Councils, the placing of licensing under the County Councils, the adoption of local option, the application of the principle of religious equality to the countries of Scotland and Wales, the shortening of Parliaments, the payment of members, the amendment of the system of registration, the establishment of what is called one man, one vote, the equalisation of the death duties, and many more such proposals. Well sir, it is very well for gentlemen to amuse themselves. I do not grudge them that amusement for one moment. But what is the fact? The fact is that these are the issues which have been placed before the country. . . . I do not speak of every one of them as standing in the same category. I will not say that every one of them has the unanimous assent of every one on this side of the House; but still, speaking generally they are the measures which represent the essential character of Liberal policy, and they are the measures which, in conjunction with—and I would even say in subordination to—the great question of our relations with Ireland, have received the distinct stamp of the approbation of the country."

But even better than this passage of measured firmness, so skilfully binding together the claims of the differing Radical groups that followed him, were the Irish passages of his speech, the pathos of his personal confession,² the loudly cheered warning to the Lords, and the final appeal to England not to abuse her strength in her relations with Ireland. The last difficult stage of a great career could hardly have been opened more fittingly.

¹ *Hansard*, August 9th.

² *Ibid.*: "The question of Ireland is to me personally almost everything. It is almost, if not altogether, my sole link with public life. It has been my primary and absorbing interest for the last six or seven years, and so it will continue till the end."

CHAPTER VIII

THE FOURTH GLADSTONE GOVERNMENT BEGINS

"The problem before Mr. Gladstone was to reconcile the claims of the younger Radicals with the real or supposed vested interests of such of his former colleagues as still survived and remained in political life. In favour of the latter there was their assumed conversance with official routine, and the possession of certain administrative faculties which had gone through a period of training. In favour of the younger men was the scarcely suppressed cry which was heard on all sides that it was time to get rid of men who had been trained to Whiggism, had held office through all the phases which Liberalism had undergone since the death of Lord Palmerston and had never thought of Home Rule until ordered to support it at the bidding of their great leader. Whatever may have been the motives which actuated Mr. Gladstone, he finally decided to fill his Cabinet as far as possible with his old friends. . . ."

The Annual Register, 1892, shows bias.

"What policy the electors intended by their votes to promote is a question which must probably be answered in a different manner in different localities. No reasonable person doubts that a large number of the Radical members have been elected on account of their views on other subjects than Home Rule. It is notorious that the Welsh voted for Radical candidates, not for their love of Home Rule, but for their aversion towards the Welsh Church. The crofters of the Scottish Highlands and the peasants of Norfolk were full of agrarian projects and aspirations; but they give little heed to Ireland. In Wiltshire and Oxfordshire the labourers, misled by a falsehood of magnificent audacity, voted to prevent the Tories from imposing duties upon corn. The mining constituencies voted for the Eight Hours Bill; the Leicester people voted against vaccination; the Dockyard constituencies were fired with indignation against some obscure Admiralty wrongs . . . no power in the Constitution can secure that the will of the nation shall be ascertained (on Home Rule) except the House of Lords . . . that a special election shall be held to return the House of Commons that is to deal with this question . . . that no such fundamental change shall be introduced into our ancient polity unless England and Scotland are assenting parties. . . ."

LORD SALISBURY in the *National Review*, November 1892.

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“The measure, though it runs with one important exception upon the same lines as its predecessor, shows in several points a great and marked improvement. To call it a measure of separation would be utterly childish and absurd. We are not enamoured of Second Chambers, or of what John Bright used to call fancy franchises. But it may be necessary to recognise in some practical shape the demand of the minority for protection, and nobody can say that they have not got it. It is quite true, as Mr. Gladstone says, that the exclusion of the Irish members (as suggested in 1886) does not destroy, and indeed cannot destroy, the supremacy of Parliament. But a large body of electors have been brought to think that it would, and many Liberals have pledged themselves to vote against it. We must not forget that Irish members have in the past rendered great services to the Liberal party, and may be expected to do so again. If they choose to stay, it is not for us to expel them. . . .”

The Daily News on the Home Rule Bill of February 1893.

ON August 12, 1892, Lord Salisbury resigned office after the vote of "no confidence" carried the previous day in the Commons. Queen Victoria was far from pleased with the prospect that faced her. She would have liked, had it been possible, to pass over Mr. Gladstone and had actually spoken of offering the Prime Ministership to Lord Rosebery.¹ But though she was prevented from making a political blunder certain to strengthen Mr. Gladstone and weaken the Crown, her true sentiments about Gladstone and his Radical coadjutors could hardly be concealed. Conscious, indeed, that Gladstone's great age and small majority made him something of a Prime Minister on sufferance,² the Queen felt strong enough to impose troublesome conditions on Gladstone's Cabinet-making that would hardly have been tolerated in 1880 or 1886. The ban on Sir Charles Dilke Gladstone could, perhaps, hardly have challenged in view of his own action in Parnell's case. But the royal refusal to admit Labouchere, the guerrilla Radical leader of 1886-92, into the Cabinet,³ and the royal intimation that Lord Ripon, the Viceroy of 1880-4, would be refused the India Office⁴ might both have caused the Queen much more trouble than they did if Gladstone had been younger and less anxious to press on a second Home Rule Bill.

But preliminary troubles notwithstanding, the Cabinet of seventeen which took office in August 1892 seemed a strong and, from the Palace point of view, a most "dangerously advanced" combination. In John Morley, George Trevelyan, Shaw-Lefevre and A. J. Mundella very "extreme" Radical points of view were represented by senior politicians with previous Cabinet experience,

¹ Cf. Lord Crewe's *Life of Lord Rosebery*, ii, 399, for the Queen herself. Rosebery had made a reputation and acquired popularity as a "Progressive" Chairman of the London County Council able to consort easily on that body with Alderman Ben Tillett and Councillor John Burns while retaining Imperialist convictions that were not very common among his political associates. When she abandoned the idea of making Rosebery Prime Minister, the Queen still meant to have him as Foreign Secretary so that he might prevent a Radical resolution to evacuate Egypt.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 397 and 403, for the trouble given to Gladstone by Sir William Harcourt who would have liked, in view of Gladstone's age, a sort of Deputy Prime Ministership and who did make trouble about Gladstone's Cabinet List. Harcourt, among other things, disliked the Court attempts to secure an almost independent position at the Foreign Office for Lord Rosebery.

³ Cf. Thorold, *Labouchere*, pp. 373-8, for consequent troubles to Gladstone.

⁴ P. Guedalla, *The Queen and Mr. Gladstone*, ii, 438.

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and on most contentious occasions it seemed probable that these would recruit not merely Mr. Asquith and Professor Bryce, newcomers to the Cabinet, but Gladstone, Harcourt, Ripon, and Campbell-Bannerman.¹ Even Lord Rosebery, upon whom the Court was relying for a continuation of the "firm" foreign and Imperial policy of Lord Salisbury, had repeatedly shocked the Queen by speeches on home politics which she denounced as "radical to a degree to be almost communistic".² And the Cabinet certainly started off with some decision and success. On August 18th Parliament was prorogued in order to allow Cabinet Committees to draft the ambitious programme of "advanced" legislation that it was intended to present to Parliament at the end of January 1893. Meanwhile a decisive defeat was inflicted on a dangerous Conservative attempt to discredit the new Government and its Home Rule policy from the outset. Though John Morley's re-election at Newcastle was opposed by a Conservative prepared to bid for the "Labour" vote by offering an Eight Hours Bill, the plan miscarried.³ And Morley's increased majority,⁴ not to mention the virtual breakdown of plans to oppose Harcourt's re-election at Derby, must have encouraged the Cabinet not to be hesitant in forwarding "progress", during the Recess, by use of the great executive powers in Ministers' hands.

Important reversals of Conservative policy and important steps "on the path of Liberal advance" were, in fact, undertaken in several Government Departments during the Recess of 1892-3. At the Irish Office Morley first busied himself in preparing the withdrawal of the Coercion proclamations issued under the Crimes Act of 1887, a withdrawal whose effect was practically to make that Act inoperative. When Morley's new proclamations had been posted on September 14th, even more ticklish work remained to be done under an unrelenting stream of Conservative criticism. Clemency had to be recommended for some notoriously over-punished Irish "convicts" sentenced at the height of the Coercion

¹ Morley was Chief (Irish) Secretary, Trevelyan Scottish Secretary, Shaw-Lefevre First Commissioner of Works and Mundella President of the Board of Trade. Asquith was Home Secretary, Bryce Chancellor of the Duchy, Gladstone Prime Minister and Lord Privy Seal, Harcourt Chancellor of the Exchequer, Ripon Colonial Secretary and Campbell-Bannerman Secretary for War.

² Crewe's *Rosebery*, ii, 399.

³ Despite the fact that Keir Hardie campaigned against Morley.

⁴ Morley has come in as junior member at the General Election with 10,905 votes against the Conservative senior member's 13,823. At the re-election polls he obtained 12,983 votes against 11,244 for the Conservative candidate.

struggle;¹ a Royal Commission had to be set up to recommend, it was hoped, an equitable solution in the numerous cases where evictions, poisoning the life of the countryside, had followed on "Plan of Campaign" activities which evicted tenants and their supporters were now most anxious to abandon in return for reinstatement;² and, then, a beginning had to be made with the study of what suitable Catholics there were to recommend, over the head of County Lords-Lieutenant if necessary, for nomination as J.P.s.³

It was this same question of the composition of the Benches that gave ample occupation to the Ministers responsible in England and Wales, Lord Herschell as Lord Chancellor and Bryce as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. In many English and Welsh counties the Lords-Lieutenant were almost as completely out of sympathy with the bulk of the population as were their Irish counterparts. Accordingly the Benches they had hitherto been allowed to nominate, virtually without challenge, were both

¹ Cf. Morley's *Recollections*, i, 334-8, for his account of the release of four of the men sentenced for the "Gweedore Crime" of 1889 when a crowd defending a popular priest from a Coercion arrest, immediately after Sunday service, had fought the police and killed an inspector.

² Cf. *Hansard*, March 13, 1893, for the hot Conservative assault eventually delivered on this Evicted Tenants' Commission presided over by Mr. Justice Mathew. It was continued on March 29th (*Ibid.*).

³ Morley's *Recollections*, i, 338-40, for an interesting picture: "Administration of the law is a great deal more important for the contentment and well-being of a community than most purely political questions. Our six years of vigilant attention while in Opposition to this side of Irish affairs has shown the paradox of a magistracy mainly Protestant in a country predominantly Catholic. We were bound to attempt redress of the balance. That was not so easy as it might seem. I scorned delights and lived laborious days in going with the Lord Chancellor (of Ireland) through lists of magistrates proposed to him. That contained a certain food for sardonic amusement. . . . Among worthies early mentioned to us for the county bench were: a pawnbroker, with too great a kindness for stolen goods; a man commended by the bishops with remarkable unction, but just before his commission was signed news came that he had been sentenced to one month's imprisonment by a "packed Unionist bench"; a man who had been twice tried for firing out of his shop at a Protestant procession; a man described as "blunt, but inclined to be honest", not much education, what he has he picked up in gaol, where he passed some portion of his youth; a considerable number of men who farm small holdings, and drink freely at fairs and markets; a nominee who had the misfortune to get himself indicted for rape, but not to be outwitted by the law he married the lady.

The Chancellor, one of the best-natured and most helpful colleagues that ever lived, ploughed steadily through the lists, with the aid of information from the local constabulary officers, and in the end we made a panel of new men, not much behind the old in real respectability. . . . No scandal in the new was comparable with the scandal of the old, and no ill came of it. We appointed 637 county justices over the heads of the lieutenants of counties: 554 of them Catholics, 83 Protestants. . . . We reduced the old Protestant ascendancy from between 3 and 4 to 1, to a proportion of rather more than 2 to 1."

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unrepresentative and unpopular. Herschell and Bryce seem to have opened by appealing to the Lords-Lieutenant for nominations from a wider variety of classes and interests and, then, after failing to get a satisfactory response, to have begun making their own inquiries with a view to nominating independently of the Lords-Lieutenant, wherever such a course seemed suitable. And some of the most revealing of the minor political incidents of 1893 actually turned on the measure of the two Ministers' success. Mr. Bryce incurred Conservative censure for admitting in Parliament, on March 13th, that "he had tried to persuade the Lord-Lieutenant of Lancashire (the Earl of Sefton) to place more Gladstonians upon the Bench but that Lord-Lieutenant having 'absolutely declined to entertain the suggestion', Mr. Bryce had revoked his powers and had gone back to the old practice of obtaining recommendations from all sources".¹ Lord Herschell, on the other hand, aroused "advanced" wrath by being too meticulous in his examination of the claims of Radical aspirants to the Bench even after Sir Charles Dilke had procured a House of Commons resolution on May 5, 1893, which should have strengthened his hand.² In September 1893 a Radical Parliamentary Committee complained to the Prime Minister, and on November 15th it brought to the Lord Chancellor an astonishingly strong deputation of 210 English, Scottish and Welsh M.P.s accompanied by 70 sympathetic Irishmen, intent on cajoling or coercing him into a large increase of the number of Radical and Labour magistrates.³ But Mr. Morley, Mr. Bryce and Lord Herschell were not the only Ministers occupied, willingly or unwillingly, in exploring, from the moment of taking office, what

¹ *Annual Register*, 1893, English History, pp. 93-4, for this unfriendly précis of Mr. Bryce's remarks. Between August 1892 and May 1893 Bryce seems to have commissioned thirty-three "working-men magistrates".

² *Hansard*, May 5, 1893, for the majority of 293 against 240 which carried Dilke's resolution declaring it no longer expedient that the appointment of county magistrates should be made by the Lord Chancellor solely on the recommendation of the Lords-Lieutenant.

³ *Annual Register*, 1893, English History, pp. 292-5, for a full but unfriendly account. Though Herschell showed some fight against the attempt to dictate wholesale admissions to the County Benches without careful examination of individual records, he presumably played some part in creating a precedent with regard to the Lords-Lieutenant themselves, when Alexander Peckover became Lord-Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire in 1893. Peckover, a Quaker banker, seems to have been the first Dissenting Lord-Lieutenant of an English county (though the Jewish Lord Rothschild had held the Buckinghamshire Lord-Lieutenancy since 1889) and, as a commoner, Peckover was also an exception among the usual run of English Lords-Lieutenant.

"progress" might be achieved departmentally and administratively. Six years of Conservative rule, much of it arousing complaint from the "people", had left a situation in which nearly every Minister, even when he was not looking for a spectacular chance of reversing or "improving" a Conservative decision, was likely to be worried into "doing something" by a deputation. This is not the place to examine detailed changes explored and sometimes executed, say, at the Scottish Office, the Education Department, the Post Office and the Admiralty.¹ Nor is this the place to explain why Mr. Gladstone offered Wales a Royal Commission of Inquiry into the conditions of Land-Tenure² ruling there or why the India Office³ and the Colonial Office both saw some changes of administrative attitude. Here it will suffice to say something of what Mr. Asquith did at the Home Office, Mr. Fowler at the Local Government Board and Mr. Mundella at the Board of Trade.

At the Home Office Mr. Asquith was fortunate enough to find exceptional opportunities to make his mark quickly. Promptly summoned as he was to deal with Radical London's greatest grievance, the prohibition of Trafalgar Square meetings since 1887,⁴ Mr. Asquith devised a set of regulations for such meetings

¹ The Admiralty, for instance, began to consider the introduction of the eight-hour day into the Government Dockyards.

² Cf. *The Times*, September 14th, for a speech made the previous day by Gladstone, then on a visit to Wales, at the foot of Snowdon. He alleged, apparently on the authority of figures supplied to him by the Welsh member, T. E. Ellis, whom he had appointed a Junior Lord of the Treasury, that Welsh tenant-farmers were on the average only being allowed remissions of rent to the extent of seven per cent whereas in England the corresponding remissions, brought about by the same "Agricultural Depression" were twenty-four per cent. The accuracy and fairness of Mr. Gladstone's figures were at once disputed by the Welsh landlords and a very pretty controversy began. Gladstone, who was under great obligations to Welsh Radicalism, finally gave the Welsh Radicals a special opportunity of proving their case before the Welsh Land Commission appointed, after long preliminaries, on March 17, 1893.

³ Though the "Silver Question" was the dominating one for India at this time, the application "liberal" or otherwise of the Indian Councils Act of 1892 had great constitutional importance. Provincial self-government certainly seemed to have advanced a step nearer under the decisions of 1893. Meanwhile the Gladstonian India Office was being driven on to challenge the action of the Anglo-Indian military authorities in disregarding or evading the instructions that had been given in 1889, under the pressure of the "Nonconformist conscience" at home, "to discontinue the state-regulated vice, under which houses of ill-fame were almost as much part and parcel of the establishment of the Army in India as Her Majesty's Chaplains". (Cf. *Review of Reviews*, April and May 1893).

⁴ Cf. J. P. Alderson, *Mr. Asquith*, pp. 55-7: "On 19th October 1892, a powerful deputation from the Executive of the Metropolitan Radical Federation waited upon Mr. Asquith to ask for permission to hold a demonstration in Trafalgar Square on 13th November (the anniversary of 'Bloody Sunday' in

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which the Metropolitan Police accepted as workable. After the first authorised meeting had taken place on November 5th and had been followed without trouble by a monster meeting of the Metropolitan Radical Federation on Sunday, November 13th,¹ Mr. Asquith could congratulate himself on having gone some way in raising his importance. But he was planning more. "Labour" had long been demanding a large increase of the Factory Inspectorate, and Mr. Asquith, after consultations with his Home Office Factory Department and presumably with the Treasury also, was ready to agree that the increase of Factory Inspectors from 59 to 69 undertaken some time previously might well be extended. Accordingly, after issuing an important new Order under the outworkers' register clause of the 1891 Factory Act,² Mr. Asquith was ready to announce his next advance on January 24, 1893. Two women Inspectors were to be appointed for the first time; fifteen Inspectors' Assistants, a new grade which it was hoped to recruit almost entirely from among working men, were to be added to the existing staff in view of the extra work entailed, among other things, by the new outworker Order; and, finally, three provincial Factory Inspection centres were to be set up at

1887) and to urge that the order of 13th November 1887 should be modified. For some time previous there had been considerable agitation in Socialist quarters on this question, and threats had been made, if permission were not granted, to hold meetings without leave." Mr. Asquith announced that the Government proposed on Saturday afternoons and Sundays, or any Bank Holiday, to allow any meeting of which fitting notice had been given to the police, which obeyed the instructions of the police, and which dispersed before nightfall. It was a most adroit solution from the Government's point of view because, among other things, it met all "reasonable" Radical demands so fully that the extremists of the Social Democratic Federation who had pressed for the unconditional right of meeting in Trafalgar Square, day or night, weekday or holiday, so that they might renew their "notorious and dangerous" unemployed meetings of 1886-7, found themselves isolated from the mass of "reasonable" working men. These could not but admit that the shopkeepers of the neighbourhood, and the police, had a point of view which deserved attention.

¹ The *Annual Register*, 1892, no friend, attributes the meeting to the S.D.F. and gives it an attendance of about 25,000.

² J. P. Alderson, *Mr. Asquith*, pp. 73-4, makes strong claims for this Order: "It is true that Mr. Matthews, the preceding Home Secretary, had, under strong pressure . . . issued an order requiring a list of outworkers to be kept by manufacturers of articles of wearing apparel. The order, however, as everyone acquainted with the working of the Factory Acts knows, produced no effect. It was not properly circulated. . . . The order he (Mr. Asquith) issued was given the widest publicity possible. . . . Further, Mr. Asquith's order applied not only to the making of wearing apparel, but also to the manufacture of furniture and upholstery work, to electro-plating and to file-making, these additions covering most of the worst cases of sweating, apart from those in the tailoring trade and the chain and nail-making trades. All these trades abounded in small workshops, and a lot of the work was "contracted out" and done by the outworkers in their

Glasgow, Birmingham and Manchester or Leeds, in order to provide Inspectors, employers and Trade Unions alike, with suitable regional facilities nearer than Whitehall.¹ No wonder Mr. Asquith felt strong enough, when Parliament reassembled, to give a flat negative to demands from the Parnellite group, led by Mr. Redmond, that the cases of fourteen "Dynamiters", sentenced for outrages dating back to 1883, should be reconsidered.² He had convinced himself and he convinced his audience that, since taking office, he had most carefully and dispassionately examined the cases in question and had found no reasonable doubt as to the guilt of those sentenced.

It remains to say a word of Mr. Fowler's changes at the Local Government Board and Mr. Mundella's at the Board of Trade. One of Mr. Fowler's "forward steps" was the "Poor Law reform" under which Guardians became entitled to visit the Workhouses, for which they were responsible, whenever they were minded so to do. Another "reform", intended to protect workhouse-inmates from possible harshness or unfeelingness on the part of the Workhouse Master or Mistress, was the Order suggesting and authorising the appointment, by the Guardians, of Committees of lady visitors with some supervisory rights.³ And, finally, there was the appointment of a Royal Commission on the Aged Poor⁴ to consider, among other things, whether an Old Age Pension scheme might not be devised capable of keeping the "deserving poor" out of the workhouse altogether. Politically, the appointment of this Commission meant, it was hoped, when supplemented by "bold Liberal reforms" like Mr. Asquith's, a decided check to Opposition attempts to make of Mr. Chamberlain, on the strength of some own homes—damp, foul, ill-lighted, insanitary holes, few of them, possibly, even known to the inspectors, and those few rarely visited. . . ." The sub-contractor, taking work out and setting women and young persons from his own family to labour with him in his own kitchen, was one of the great problems of the humanitarians who would have liked to force the transfer of much of this activity to properly equipped factories by making it progressively harder for putters-out of work to get their "jobs" done at "starvation rates" in the workers' own homes.

¹ *The Times*, January 25, 1893.

² There was a long history of Irish agitation on behalf of these and other "political prisoners", some of whom had received very severe sentences. The Parnellite party's strongest appeal to patriotic sentiment in Ireland lay in such forwarding of this agitation as was found in Mr. Redmond's Parliamentary activity. (Cf. *Hansard*, February 9, 1893.)

³ Cf. *Review of Reviews*, February 1893.

⁴ The Commission would be better called one on the Poor Law and the Aged Poor but the newspapers seized on its most picturesque and sentimental aspect in finding it a short name. (Cf. *Ibid.*, January 1893.)

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magazine writing,¹ the main hope of the working man. Meanwhile, Mundella at the Board of Trade was planning a large expansion of a first measure he had taken when, in 1886, he had appointed a Labour Correspondent to keep the Board in touch with working-class developments.² This correspondent was now to become head of a Departmental Section at Whitehall as Chief Labour Correspondent; three new Correspondents one of them a woman, were to be appointed to provincial centres under him;³ and with the help of the allied Commercial and Statistical sections, now grouped together with the Labour section as the "Labour Department" of the Board of Trade, an official *Labour Gazette* was to be issued monthly. Of this *Labour Gazette* Mr. Mundella and his Parliamentary Secretary, the "Labour" member, Mr. Burt, were particularly hopeful when, on January 24, 1893, they

¹ *National Review*, February 1892, for Chamberlain's contributory Old Age Pension scheme which had already been of some service at the polls. Now in the *Nineteenth Century* for November 1892 he put forward a large social programme, which served Opposition bye-election candidates well, though the Conservative party, as such, was not committed to it and though numbers of Conservatives privately repudiated it. S. H. Jeyes's *Mr. Chamberlain* summed up the new programme's principal items thus:

- (1) Statutory control of the hours of work in mining and other especially dangerous or laborious callings.
- (2) Local regulation of the hours of employment in shops.
- (3) The establishment of arbitration tribunals for trade disputes.
- (4) Compensation to workmen or their legal representatives for injury or death not caused by the fault of the sufferer.
- (5) Old Age Pensions for deserving poor persons.
- (6) Control over the immigration of foreign paupers. (Industry had become "depressed" again after the "Baring crisis" and an outcry had arisen in the poor quarters of the great cities, to be repeated at intervals up to 1905, against permitting the entry of "pauper aliens", especially Russian Jews, to "snatch jobs from Britishers". Though the cry ignored the danger to the swarms of United Kingdom emigrants to the United States (1891 figures were 156,395) of setting any "illiberal" British example, it became a useful Conservative electoral asset especially in the East End of London and in Leeds.)
- (7) Increasing the power of Local Authorities to carry out improvements and provide for the better housing of the poor.
- (8) Enabling them to advance money to working men who desired to purchase their dwelling-houses.

² John Burnett, the experienced Labour leader appointed, seems to have made a strong impression on everybody acquainted with his work at the Board of Trade. Even the Conservative, Geoffrey Drage, in *The Unemployed*, a book of 1894 very critical of Board of Trade methods, singled out Burnett for warm praise.

³ *Annual Register*, 1893, English History, p. 9, summarises the duties of these correspondents thus: "These correspondents would be charged with the duty of informing the department of important events affecting labour in their district, and of supplementing, where necessary, the inquiries of the central office by local investigations. In the future the local centres thus established would possibly have additional duties cast upon them."

explained the intended changes to deputations from the Co-operative Union and the Trades Union Congress. It would "supply accurate information on subjects of special interest to workmen and workwomen"; though only priced at a penny "a large number of copies would be gratuitously distributed to free libraries, workmen's organisations, mechanics' institutes, chambers of commerce and other institutions"; and any workman, seeking additional information, had the right to make application to the "Labour Department". Accurate knowledge on the condition of trade and industry, Mr. Mundella believed, would help to end much of the "industrial war" arising from "ignorance on both sides".¹

For the opportunity of making all these "progressive" changes in their various departments, for the chance, despite their dubious mandate,² of preparing, in relative peace, a remarkable programme of Radical legislation for the 1893 Session, many of the Ministers had had a heavy price to pay. It was not merely that cherished hopes of offering the world the evacuation of Egypt, on terms, had to be given up in face of Opposition's ability to raise a cry of "scuttle" strong enough to sweep the Cabinet from office. In this respect, Rosebery's appointment to the Foreign Office had half-prepared the Cabinet for the worst—for the inability even to begin serious discussion with France and Russia, the Powers leading the protest against the British occupation, without being faced by the threat of Rosebery's resignation and a break-up of the Government. In fact when, in January 1893, the impetuous young Khedive Abbas, encouraged doubtless from outside, attempted to ignore the *de facto* British Protectorate in changing his Prime Minister, the Cabinet, not without some heavy hearts, was driven to order an increase, instead of a decrease, of the British Army of Occupation.³

¹ These quotations are from the *Annual Register's* summary. It will, perhaps have been perceived that Mr. Mundella's "Labour Department" was a first stage towards the construction of a Ministry of Labour—and that his *Labour Gazette* is the modern *Ministry of Labour Gazette*.

² Cf. *National Review*, November 1892, for an article by Lord Salisbury, attempting to prove not merely that the General Election had given no mandate for Home Rule or, indeed, for any single important Radical demand, but that a mere 765 votes, distributed over the twenty-one cases where the Government majority had been between three and sixty-two, had put the Government in office.

³ Cf. *Review of Reviews*, February 1893, for the reigning "Imperialist" tone even in a Liberal like Stead who was to agitate fiercely against the Boer War: "It must be admitted that the stars in their courses seem to have been fighting for Imperial interests since the present Government took office . . . we are going to keep the Union Jack at the masthead, in spite of all perfidious attempts of

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But Uganda was, in some respects, a more bitter pill to swallow than Egypt. The British East Africa Company, short of funds and not very hopeful of quick or profitable development in a land distracted by religious feuds between Protestants, Catholics and Mohammedans, had notified the Salisbury Government of its intention to evacuate the country. The Salisbury Government had made no sign of interfering and might have been strong enough to withstand any cry attempted against "a hauling down of the Union Jack". But it soon became plain that the Gladstone Government was not. Conservative journalists would have liked nothing better than the opportunity of opening a raging, tearing campaign against the Gladstonians' "Little Englandism" and their alleged readiness to leave British missionaries and black Uganda converts to the tender mercies of the slave-raiders as once Gordon and his followers had been left in the Sudan. The dejection of men like Gladstone, Harcourt and Morley as they saw themselves irresistibly forced forward¹ to the assumption of direct Imperial responsibility for what seemed unnecessary and unprofitable entanglements in Central Africa was intense. The agony of sacrificing the principles of a lifetime and of surrendering them to what seemed merely a stupid and vulgar Jingoism was certainly very bitter. Harcourt is known to have sworn to "die a thousand deaths" rather than give way on Uganda; Morley repeatedly threatened resignation both on Uganda and Egypt; and there is an astonishing account of the heavily charged atmosphere reigning at Hawarden on the Uganda question in mid-December 1892, when Morley arrived at Gladstone's home for important decisions on the coming Home Rule Bill. "Mr. Gladstone was almost out of his mind about Uganda," Morley reported, "... He was really like King Lear."²

Little Englanders to haul it down. . . . The importance of the incident had been to afford the scuttlers in this country with a demonstration of the impossibility of taking any step in the direction which they desiderate."

¹ Cf. *Annual Register*, 1893, English History, pp. 144-6, for some of the stages. "The religious bodies, English and Scotch, however, bestirred themselves, and finding themselves supported by a large mass of public opinion, wholly unsympathetic with missionary enterprise in general, they were able to bring considerable pressure to bear upon the Earl of Rosebery, who from the first had been regarded as the exponent of 'Imperial ideas' in the Cabinet." Even so, Rosebery apparently had twice to threaten resignation to get from Harcourt the money to keep the East Africa Company in Uganda till 1893 (cf. Crewe's *Rosebery*, ii, 405-6). The next stage was the dispatch of a British Commissioner who prepared the way for the formal declaration of the Protectorate, gazetted on June 19, 1894, after Rosebery had become Prime Minister.

² Cf. *Private Diaries of Sir Algernon West*, pp. 91, 92.

There was compensation, of course, in drafting the ambitious "forward" programme that was being prepared for the 1893 Session, a programme that included not merely a Home Rule Bill for Ireland, but the most far-reaching legislative proposals for Britain ever officially made in a single Session. Whatever happened in the immediate future—even if the plan for rousing the "country" against the House of Lords' expected rejection of most of the items on the Government programme failed, History, it appeared, would still have been made. The bold "reforming" Bills of 1893 would have been put on record as having passed the House of Commons, and Liberalism would have been committed to them until they were on the Statute Book. Even if a General Election fought, say, in 1894 on the battle-ground of "The People against the Peers" failed to yield a satisfactory result, the consequent damming-up of "progress" for several years more would only increase the apparent likelihood of a sweeping democratic victory afterwards. Then, the 1893 programme might be realised in full as also the further aim of "ending or mending the Lords".

Though some strategy of this kind had become the obvious hope of the "advanced" portion of the Cabinet as soon as it was clear that the General Election of 1892 had only given them a disappointing majority, the programme of domestic legislation announced in the Queen's Speech of January 31, 1893, still surprised many by its range and Radical character. Every smooth official word, read for the absent and hostile Queen,¹ was full of meaning and should be quoted here:²

"A bill will be submitted to you," Parliament was told, "on the earliest available occasion to amend the provision for the government of Ireland. It has been prepared with the desire to afford contentment to the Irish people, important relief to Parliament, and additional securities for the strength and union of the empire.

"Bills will be promptly laid before you for the amendment of the

¹ The *Review of Reviews*, February 1893, commented thus: "Parliament opened yesterday, but the Queen was not present. Considering the importance of the issues that are to be raised, and the probability that neither Her Majesty nor her Prime Minister will have many more opportunities of uniting in the performance of this ceremonial function, Her Majesty's decision to absent herself is to be regretted. Absenteeism has not answered so well with Ireland that it can be commended for adoption by British sovereigns. If the Queen was not there, Mr. Gladstone was to the fore—very much to the fore. The old gentleman is declared by all his friends and familiars to be in the highest of spirits—quite a rollicking old boy, in short."

² *The Times*, February 1st.

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system of registration in Great Britain, for shortening the duration of Parliaments, and for establishing the equality of the franchise by the limitation of each elector to a single vote.

"There will also be proposed to you various bills bearing on the condition of labour, among which are measures in relation to the liability of employers, the hours of labour for railway servants, and a bill to amend the law of conspiracy.

"Your attention will likewise be invited to measures for the further improvement of local government, including the creation of parish councils, for the enlargement of the powers of the London County Council, for the prevention of the growth of new vested interests in the ecclesiastical establishments of Scotland and Wales, and for direct local control over the liquor traffic, together with other measures of public utility. . . ."

The success that at first attended this offensive strategy adopted by the Cabinet confounded many of the political prophets. The by-elections of the Recess had not, on the whole, been unfavourable to Ministers—but with the gathering of Parliament and the opening of serious attack upon them and their Irish allies, the precarious Ministerial majority in the Commons was expected to show signs of dissolving, with serious effects on their "position in the country". The very reverse proved to be the case. The long opening debate on the Government's general policy—in Parliamentary parlance the Debate on the Address—found Ministers able to beat off challenges from different directions, sometimes by unexpectedly large majorities. And after this reasonably cheerful start had been made on the Address between January 31st and February 11th, there came, on February 13th, Mr. Gladstone's remarkable introduction of his second Home Rule Bill. Once again the nation was almost spell-bound by the prodigies still executable by its "Grand Old Man". And when, after several nights of debate, an undisputed First Reading was accorded to the Bill, it was obvious that in the tremendous struggle certain on the Bill's later stages, the Premier's remarkable record and personality would tell more strongly in its favour than some quite skilled judges had foreseen as possible.¹

Meanwhile the Ministerial legislative effort had already begun,

¹ Cf. *Review of Reviews*, March 1893: "The Old Man Eloquent spoke for nearly two hours, and only forgot two items of importance in the complicated details of the new scheme, a fact attributed solely to his having once turned over two sheets of his notes instead of one. Everyone agrees it was a great speech, and at least half the electorate believes that it unfolded a great scheme for the settlement of the perennial Irish difficulty."

and the apparently rapid progress made after the first stage of the Home Rule Bill had been disposed of, seemed to promise well. Thus on February 20th the "advanced" English Registration Bill was read a first time,¹ the Scottish Registration Bill was introduced, and a Second Reading proceedings were begun on the Employers' Liability Bill. On February 22nd Second Readings were accorded to the Places of Worship Enfranchisement Bill, the Cheap Trains (London) Bill and the Railway Servants (Hours of Labour) Bill while a fourth measure, the Trade Union Provident Funds Bill, actually reached Third Reading thus early in the Session.² Then, on the 23rd, there was read a first time the Church Suspensory Bill for Wales—the necessary precursor of Welsh Disestablishment³—and on the 24th, amid other significant business, including the adoption of a Resolution for the equalisation of rates throughout the Metropolis, was passed the Second Reading of the London County Council (General Powers) Bill. Finally may be noted the First Reading given on February 27th to the Liquor Traffic (Local Control) Bill. It was on the same day that Mr. Gladstone bore witness to the Government's zeal for positive legislative achievement by demanding Morning Sittings of the House of Commons in order to increase its working-time. He obtained the Morning Sittings by 270 votes against 228.

Here is one instructed comment on this surprisingly successful beginning by the Government, and the even more surprising by-election successes accompanying it:⁴

Ministers have surprised everybody, themselves probably most of all, by the success with which they have opened their first Session. They have scored time after time, and they have been even more successful in the country than in the House of Commons. Such a run of good luck as they have had seldom cheers the hearts of an Administration at the meeting of a new Parliament. They have won the seats of Pontefract, Hexham, and Cirencester, increased their majority in Gateshead,

¹ A Bill to enable hundreds of thousands more to be put upon the Voting Registers by abolishing rating conditions and reducing the residential qualification to three months.

² This Bill to exempt Trade Union investment-income, ear-marked for provident benefits, from Income Tax was pushed by the Gladstonian "Labour" member, Howell. Aided by the Government it became law on March 28th.

³ *Hansard*, February 23rd. The Bill was, of course, to suspend further nominations to such Church appointments in Wales as would be considered to entitle their holders to compensation when the finance of Welsh Disestablishment was decided. There was precedent for such action in the case of Irish Disestablishment.

⁴ *Review of Reviews*, March 1893, for W. T. Stead's opinion.

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diminished the Unionist majorities in Stockport and Horsham, and returned anti-Parnellites in both the divisions of Meath. In the House they have registered majorities twice their normal strength with the result that the Unionist rank-and-file have for the moment somewhat lost their heads. Mr. Balfour being unfortunately laid up with influenza, Lord Randolph has come to the fore, and the *Standard* declares in disgust that the Opposition has been "beaten, outmanœuvred, and discredited" owing to "mismanagement, carelessness or indifference". . . . For the moment the Unionists are gnashing their teeth, and the Liberals are cock-a-hoop. But it will not last.

No part of this comment was wiser than the last. The "extreme" Local Option proposals, for example, read a first time on February 27th,¹ were certain to bring into the field against the Government the whole formidable weight of the menaced and outraged "Trade", whose deadly hostility, indeed, proved a powerful influence against Ministers for years.² Moreover, the work of picking holes in the Home Rule Bill had only just begun. It soon became the leading and most successful Opposition sport.

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, February 27th (Harcourt), for the facilities offered to such units as rural parishes and borough wards to close their drinking establishments. One-tenth of the registered local electors could require a poll, all expenditure on canvassing and the like was to be prohibited, and if two-thirds of those voting required the end of liquor licensing in its allegedly most offensive forms, licences were to be withdrawn without compensation at the expiry date (with the proviso, however, that no such withdrawal under the Bill was to commence till three years after the Bill's passing). Off-licences were, of course, still to remain, as were licences for railway refreshment bars and establishments serving drinks exclusively with meals. The Bill, it was claimed, was only directed against the "bar, the gin palace, the tap-room, and the beer-house".

² Thus Harcourt, who introduced the Bill, was "sensationally" ejected from his apparently safe Derby seat at the next General Election of 1895.

CHAPTER IX

HOME RULE REJECTED, 1893

"We stand on the brink of a precipice. To say that Englishmen are asked to take a leap in the dark is far to understate the peril of the moment. We are asked to leave an arduous but well-known road, and to spring down an unfathomed ravine filled with rocks, on any one of which we may be dashed to pieces. The very excess of the peril hides its existence from ordinary citizens. Mr. Gladstone, they argue, is a wise man and a good man, his colleagues are partisans, they are not conspirators; it is incredible that they should recommend a measure fraught with ruin to England. But the matter is intelligible enough. Mr. Gladstone's weakness, no less than his strength, has always lain in his temporary but exclusive preoccupation with some one dominant idea. The one notion which possesses his mind . . . is that at any cost Home Rule, that is, an Irish Executive and an Irish Parliament, must be conceded—to Ireland. Enthusiasm, pride, ambition, all the motives good and bad, which can influence a statesman, urge him to achieve this one object. If he succeeds his political career is crowned with victory, if not with final triumph; if he fails his whole course during the last seven years turns out an error. . . . Blind leaders are leading a blind people, and our blind leaders, some of whom care more for Radical supremacy in England than for Imperial supremacy in Ireland, are like many other men of our time, the slaves of phrases, such as 'trust in the people', which pass muster for principles. If the blind lead the blind, what wonder if they stumble over a precipice."

From A. V. DICEY's meritorious anti-Home Rule pamphlet, *A Leap in the Dark*, 1893.

"Mr. Gladstone worked the Bill in the Commons with an infinite variety and resource never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it. . . . I have described in full elsewhere the amazing scenes where, in spite of party passion, the whole House watched him with wonder and delight as children watch a wizard. Mr. Balfour put the case against the Bill at its strongest in speech after speech, all on a high sustained level. . . . Mr. Gladstone was the only man among us all who infused commanding moral conception into the Irish movement—the only man who united the loftiest ideals of national life and public duty with the glory of words. . . . He seemed to make Irishmen believe in themselves by the very force of his own belief in them. . . ."

From MORLEY's *Recollections*, i, 358–9.

THE Home Rule Bill of 1893, known officially as the Government of Ireland Bill, was destined to run a remarkable course. Introduced in Gladstone's notable speech of February 13th, it seemed at first likely to do altogether better than its predecessor of 1886. The long Coercion struggle, arising from the Crimes Act of 1887, had sickened most "liberal-minded" Englishmen of the inevitable accompaniments of Coercion Acts and made them willing to consider even large-scale constitutional changes provided these promised to free the national future from the ugly menace of never-ending Irish crises. When Gladstone asked Englishmen to have confidence in the good sense and moderation of the future Irish Parliament,¹ when he pointed to speeches from the Irish Benches offering to accept his Home Rule Bill as closing the bitter Anglo-Irish "feud of ages",² there were certainly multitudes of his fellow-countrymen who thought the experiment worth making. All the accredited spokesmen of British "Labour" were numbered amongst the Home Rulers³ and so, of course, were all the Radical Parliamentary groups who had fought Coercion so long and so obstinately between 1887 and 1892.

In their effort, moreover, to make the Home Rule Bill of 1893 less vulnerable to attack than had been the Bill of 1886, Gladstone and Morley had repeatedly deferred to strongly established English prejudices. Thus in order to convince England of the efficacy of the checks which they were willing to provide against unfair treatment of the Protestant minority,⁴ they abandoned the

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, February 13th: "I believe myself that suspicion is the besetting vice of politicians and that trust is often the truest wisdom."

² *Ibid.*, April 21st, for Gladstone towards the end of the Second Reading proceedings: "Five speeches were made from the Irish benches . . . there was not one of those speeches which fell short of what we have declared to be in our opinion necessary for the acceptance of this Bill. We find the word finality not even eschewed by the generous unreserve of the honourable member for North Longford (Justin McCarthy, the Chairman of the Irish Nationalist majority, who had said on April 10th: 'We believe that this measure when improved in Committee will be, at all events in our time, a final settlement of the Irish question'). . . . What said the honourable member for Kerry last night? He said: 'This is a Bill that will end the feud of ages.' This is exactly what we want to do . . . to close and bury a controversy of seven hundred years."

³ "Labour" candidates had always stood for "justice for Ireland", and as early as 1874, twelve years before Gladstone himself, such a "Labour" member as Thomas Burt had pledged himself to Home Rule, committed, no doubt, by the Irish Catholic immigrants in his Morpeth constituency.

⁴ Such checks already included formidable reservations of authority to the Imperial Parliament, the Lord-Lieutenant, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, etc., and also the denial to the Irish Legislature of the right to make

awkward compromises of the single-chamber Irish Legislature of 1886 and consented in 1893 to create an Upper House of forty-eight, elected by owners and occupiers of property of £20 per annum rateable value—a high limit for Ireland and one certain to create a powerful Protestant representation. Members of this Upper House, elected for eight years and unaffected by dissolutions of the Lower House, seemed, in fact, so likely to be in a strong constitutional position as against the Lower House, democratically representing the entire Irish people, that there was some Radical complaint.¹ Again, one of the most dangerous lines of attack on the Bill of 1886 had been the argument that the absence of Irish members from the Westminster Parliament would be held in Ireland to prove that country's *de facto* independence and might make the Customs and taxation powers, reserved to Westminster, impossible to enforce from the very first. In 1893, accordingly, Gladstone and Morley gave up the hope of using the Home Rule Bill to free British political development from the never-ending problems caused by the presence of the Irish members. They consented to find room at Westminster for eighty Irish representatives empowered to vote on the many questions still to affect Britain and Ireland jointly, Defence, for example, Diplomacy and Customs Duties.²

Though this solution was eventually seen to have raised as many difficulties as it solved, its initial putting forward indubitably

laws establishing or endowing any religion, or prohibiting the free exercise of any religion; imposing any disability, or conferring any privilege, on account of religious belief; abrogating or prejudicially affecting the right to establish or maintain any place of denominational education . . . or prejudicially affecting the right of any child to attend a school receiving public money without attending the religious instruction at that school; or whereby any person may be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law, or may be denied the equal protection of the laws, or whereby private property may be taken without just compensation; or whereby any existing corporation (not being a corporation raising for public purposes, taxes, rates, etc.) may, unless it consents . . . be deprived of its rights, privileges, or property, without due process of law.

¹ Cf. *Review of Reviews*, May 1893, p. 475, for the strong objections of Mr. William Saunders, M.P. for Walworth, and founder of the Central News Agency among other things. He, like other Radicals, did not want a Liberal Government to countenance Upper Houses, especially Upper Houses meant to safeguard the privileged. There was an understandable fear of creating undesirable precedents to which Conservatives would appeal if and when "ending or mending the Lords" became practical politics.

² Eighty was a reduction from the one hundred and three actually sitting, who gave Ireland, and especially Catholic Ireland, the over-representation which had for years been a subject of Unionist complaint. Half the Gladstonian majority of 1892, and even more, might have been whittled away by Redistribution.

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helped the Government. Numbers of Gladstonians had pledged themselves to safeguard Westminster's claims over Ireland by requiring Ireland to accept suitable representation there, and directly Ministers were found to have given way on this point it appeared certain that no major troubles would arise in the Commons like those of 1886. But it still proved advisable to defer the Second Reading proceedings from March 13th to April 6th (after the Easter Recess). With the help of extra time gained by carrying, on March 9th, the resolution to suspend the "Twelve O'Clock Rule"¹ and, on March 10th, even the resolution to hold a Saturday sitting,² all manner of other Government business was meantime pushed forward—the Estimates, for example, the Parish Councils Bill and the Army (Annual) Bill.

But though this course promised to free Parliamentary time after Easter for the great Home Rule debates then expected, the Second Reading proceedings on the Home Rule Bill had not been deferred solely for reasons of convenience. For one thing, Ministers held it to be necessary to show the various sections of British Radicalism which had put them in power that they were not so absorbed by their Irish problems as to be unable to give due attention to British-demanded legislation on Employers' Liability, Welsh Church Suspension, easier Registration of Voters, Local Option, Parish Councils and the rest. Moreover, to have deferred the Second Reading proceedings on the Home Rule Bill to April gave Ministers further time to ponder over a major difficulty from a new direction but one threatening a possible repetition of the catastrophe of 1886. It was being urged from Liberal quarters³ as well as Conservative that the "in and out" arrangement by

¹ The rule by which debate on "opposed business" normally ceased at midnight on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays (and 5.30 on Wednesdays), unfinished business standing over.

² *Hansard*, March 10th, for Gladstone securing a Saturday sitting for March 11th by 256 votes against 229. Conservative "obstruction" was certainly made less attractive to contemplate when Gladstone called in the spectre of Saturday sittings to help forward what he had already effected by readiness to use morning and post-midnight sittings, if need were.

³ Cf. *Review of Reviews*, March 1893, for W. T. Stead's vigorous opposition: "The provision that the House of Commons in the future shall no longer be a compact and homogeneous body, but shall contain eighty members in it but not of it, who shall sometimes vote and sometimes be forbidden to vote, destroys the stability and equilibrium of the Government Chamber, and renders impossible the Government of the British Empire. . . . We are all for Home Rule in Ireland, if it can be established without destroying the Imperial Parliament. But, if that is impossible, then we must e'en get along in the future as we have done in the past, as best we can, without Home Rule."

which Irish members were to vote at Westminster on "Imperial" questions, but not on others, would rapidly make orderly political development impossible in Great Britain. What was to happen, for instance, if there were another General Election like that of 1892, with Gladstone in a majority when the Irishmen were counted, and Balfour when they were not?¹ Chaos in British politics might well result, it was urged, from the Irish majority's arrival, say for disputed Naval Estimates, intent on destroying an existing British Ministry, based on a British majority, because this Ministry was refusing to allow the Irish Legislature to whittle away the Protestant and minority guarantees of the Government of Ireland Bill.

The best answer to such alarms was, of course, that the existing United Kingdom system allowed Irish members much larger facilities than did Home Rule for attempting to throw British politics out of gear. Irish members were 103 in number instead of 80, and they had not to wait for a contentious "Imperial" occasion to secure access to the Lobbies but were free to seize any and every opportunity. If with these vastly superior opportunities, intransigent Irishmen had always been baffled hitherto by the great British majority collected, when necessary, by the two Front Benches acting together, the same results, it might be argued, could be produced, with even greater facility, under the new arrangements. Logical as the answer was, it failed to satisfy nervous "moderates" fascinated by the special "blackmailing" facilities apparently open to an Irish majority arriving on a bitterly contested Parliamentary scene and capable, seemingly, of out-voting Gladstone and Balfour in turn, as often as they minded. Already before the Second Reading stage was entered upon, Gladstone and Morley must ruefully have been wondering whether yet another concession to British fears might not prove necessary—and that, the supremely illogical one of keeping the eighty Irishmen of the future, like the one hundred and three of the past, at Westminster for all business!²

¹ Cf. A. V. Dicey, *A Leap in the Dark, or Our New Constitution*, for this and other objections powerfully urged from the Unionist side. The worst of it was that Morley had taken the same line in 1886 when defending the Bill of 1886 for having decided to dispense altogether with Irishmen at Westminster.

² Thus giving the Conservatives a specially advantageous line of opposition in the argument that while no British representation on any matter was to be allowed in the Irish Legislature, Irish representation on all subjects, even those having not the slightest bearing on Ireland, was to be allowed at Westminster. It was the Unionist strategy to display and to exaggerate the difficulties of any and every Home Rule plan.

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Surrender on this point was still, however, far off when the remarkable Second Reading proceedings on Home Rule opened on April 6th. By the time they were closed on April 21st, after twelve nights of debate, the Cabinet had practically decided to give way—though on the Committee stage, when the surrender might be metamorphosed into a great “concession” cutting away the last justification for a rejection of Home Rule by the Lords. Certainly, the assurances given were strong enough to enable Ministers to carry the Second Reading by 347 votes against 304, and without a single breakaway on the part of their followers.

Though Ministers had thus taken the Home Rule Bill of 1893 beyond the point which had proved fatal to the Bill of 1886, the prospect before them was still bleak enough. Already, for lack of time, Harcourt had had to postpone for a year the bold and popular Budget Radicals were demanding and to propose for 1893 not “Socialist” innovations in the Death Duties or the Income Tax, but a financial plan uncontentious enough to make no special claims upon Parliamentary time.¹ Even though the Parliamentary Order Paper was by this and similar sacrifices kept relatively clear so that Ministers might, from May 8th onward, concentrate on the Committee stage of the Home Rule Bill, the thousand amendments prepared by their opponents to delay the Bill and to tire out its partisans were hardly cheerful subjects for contemplation.²

Radical determination and self-discipline, however, and the encouraging spectacle of Gladstone's own preternatural energy, combined to make the long and difficult struggle a far from hopeless one. Thanks to the use of the “guillotine”, the Committee stage of the Home Rule Bill was completed in sixty-three sittings—and without a single defeat. The Bill's opponents had hoped that, by this time, the “country” would have had such a surfeit of Home Rule discussion as to be utterly weary of the whole subject and its difficulties, and comparatively indifferent to the annihilation

¹ Cf. *Fun*, May 3rd, for the type of cartoon evoked by “The Automatic Budget. Put a penny in the slot (a penny on the Income Tax) and the figure (Harcourt in full Privy Councillor's dress) will work”.

² Cf. *Review of Reviews*, May 1893, p. 475: “When the Bill enters Committee it will have to run the gauntlet of about a thousand amendments, most of which are put on the paper for the purpose of retarding the measure. Even when all these have been weeded out there will remain sufficient amendments to keep the House in Committee for two months notwithstanding the fact that the Bill is to be taken *de die in diem* to the exclusion of all other public business. Liberals are talking about the way in which they will make a drastic use of the closure, but that will not help them much.”

being planned in the Lords. These hopes were only partly realised, and when, on September 1st, the Third Reading was carried by 301 votes against 267, the issue, so far as the "man in the street" was concerned, still seems to have been a comparatively open one. At any rate, some Opposition discussion had been proceeding on the tactics to be followed if a "raging and tearing" Radical campaign against the Lords, opened at a General Election after the Peers should have rejected Home Rule, yielded Gladstone another small majority.¹ The "general public", it would appear, had been antagonised by some unfortunate Protestant black-guardism in Belfast and was almost wearier of Ulster talk of "armed resistance" than of Home Rule itself. By contrast with "Orange hooliganism", Nationalist Ireland seemed to be showing commendable self-restraint both at home and at Westminster. And in Britain, too, the doggedness and determination with which the Gladstonians had successfully carried Home Rule through the Commons often tended to look more business-like than the high-tragedy rhetoric on "the approaching downfall of the Empire" indulged in by some of their opponents.

But if the fickle interest of the "man in the street" tended, after a period of weariness, to be re-enlisted in a struggle assuming the sporting aspect of a contest of endurance, Unionist opponents of Home Rule knew they had excellent reasons for confidence in the ultimate issue. The Government's Local Veto Bill had infuriated the publicans and had given "the working man who liked his glass" the grievance that while the public-house or beer-shop patronised by him might be closed, the hotels and refreshment bars, catering for richer folk who ordered food with their drink, were to be left completely alone. At first sight, it would

¹ Cf. A. V. Dicey, *A Leap in the Dark*, for some of the most revealing suggestions being made (pp. 188-91, ed. 1911): "Even if such a reference to the electors should result in a Gladstonian majority, it is still possible that a further dissolution might be necessary. The majority for Home Rule might be much reduced. I doubt whether Mr. Gladstone himself would maintain that with a majority say of ten or twenty, a Minister would be morally justified in attempting a fundamental change in the constitution. . . . If, however, the dissolution should result in a Gladstonian majority, and should lead to another Home Rule Bill being sent up to their lordships, the question then arises as to the Referendum. My own conviction . . . is that the Lords would do well if they appended to any Home Rule Bill which they were prepared to accept a clause which might make its coming into force depend upon its, within a limited time, receiving the approval of the majority of the electors of the United Kingdom. . . . This course, it may be said, is unconstitutional. This word has no terrors for me; it means no more than unusual. . . ."

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appear incredible that such a "grievance", however assiduously and energetically exploited, should loom larger in the political life of the day than, say, the "benefits" proffered to "Labour" by Mr. Asquith's Employers' Liability Bill. The offer of ending the monstrous inequities of the doctrine of "common employment"¹ should alone, it would seem, have sufficed to reconcile every "working man" grumbler to the Government. But it was not so. A strident cry had already been raised against the Employers' Liability Bill itself because it proposed to end the "contracting out" from statutory Workmen's Compensation Benefits which, under employers' pressure, had become the rule in many important branches of industry. Railway employees especially seem to have been affected despite the energetic approval given by the T.U.C. to the abolition of "contracting out". As the case came to be presented by opponents of the Government, this abolition of "contracting out" would present many classes of workmen, benefiting from the operation of trusted Accident Funds jointly maintained and administered by masters and men, with the empty right to open expensive legal proceedings instead. And as Society was organised, there certainly seemed an arguable case for the view that the existing Accident Funds, though enabling employers at once to cheapen their Compensation costs and yet maintain a tight hold on their men,² did nevertheless pay out money more quickly and readily in the opening stages of a family's trouble

¹ Cf. A. Birrell's, *Law of Employers' Liability*, 1897, for a short account of how the lawyers, beginning with the case of *Priestley v. Fowler* in 1836, had busily constructed this crazy doctrine on behalf of the "comfortable classes". By the ingenuity of the law an implied but wholly fictitious condition was read into every contract of service to the following effect: "A servant when he engages to serve a master, undertakes as between himself and his master to run all the ordinary risks of the service, including the risk of negligence upon the part of a fellow servant. . . ."

Members of the travelling public were therefore free to bring actions for unlimited amount against the London and North Western Railway Co. for any negligence on the part of even the meanest of their 60,000 employees, but the meanest of their employees was barred from an action even when he had lost a limb owing to the miscalculations of their Chief Engineer. And people, of course, rushed in with "economic" justification for all this. As Mr. Birrell remarked: "Business, it was said, could not be carried on without this doctrine. Trade would desert us and fly to countries where, oddly enough, this wonderful doctrine had never been heard of."

² Two of the largest Accidents Funds in the country were those connected with the London and North Western Railway and the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway. As the employees all contributed, the right to make claims on the Accident Fund seemed, especially with some seniority, to be a valuable consideration not to be lightly thrown away by the acceptance of other employment or hazarded by indulgence in "agitation" that might bring dismissal.

than was likely to be the case when legal wrangles might have to precede any payment whatsoever.

Though it is important to remember such elements in the political atmosphere as those just described, it is still necessary to return to the Home Rule dispute for the decisive strategy in the struggle between "progress" and its opponents. Throughout the long contest in the Commons, terminated only on September 1, 1893, the enemies of Home Rule had strained every nerve to frighten the country as to its possible effects. One obvious method in that age of growing Imperialism was to complain that, while the unfriendly Empires of France, Germany and Russia strengthened themselves unceasingly for war, England was being asked to weaken the British Empire's very heart, the United Kingdom. Then it was urged that, though some Irish politicians might profess their readiness to accept the Home Rule Bill as a "final" settlement, the cause of Irish Independence would none the less advance to the forefront almost at once. Independence would be claimed as soon as the Minority and Defence safeguards of the Home Rule Bill were found to be irksome and would be forwarded by the Parliamentary manœuvres of the Irish members at Westminster. And how much might be effected even by means not disallowed in the Home Rule Bill was thus illustrated by Dicey, a constitutional lawyer of eminence from whom the Opposition in Commons and Lords borrowed extensively:¹

Let us consider for a moment a few of the things which the Irish Cabinet might do if it chose. It might confine all political, administrative, or judicial appointments to Nationalists, and thus exclude Loyalists from all positions of public trust. It might place the Bench, the magistracy, the police wholly in the hands of Catholics; it might, by encouragement of athletic clubs where the Catholic population were trained to the use of arms, combined with the rigorous suppression of every Protestant association suspected, rightly or not, of preparing resistance to the Parliament at Dublin, bring about the arming of Catholic and the disarming of Protestant Ireland, and, at the same time, raise a force as formidable to England as an openly enrolled Irish army. But the mere inaction of the Executive might in many spheres produce greater results than active unfairness. The refusal of the police for the enforcement of evictions would abolish rent throughout the country. And the same result might be attained by a more moderate course. Irish Ministers might in practice draw a distinction between "good" landlords and "bad" landlords. . . .

¹ A. V. Dicey, *A Leap in the Dark*.

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The Irish Parliament, again, even if every restriction on its powers inserted in the Home Rule Bill should pass into law, will be found to have ample scope for legislative action . . . it can do away with the right to the writ of *habeas corpus*; it can abolish the whole system of trial by jury; it can by wide rules as to the change of venue expose any inhabitant of Belfast, charged with any offence against the Irish Government, to the certainty of being tried in Dublin or in Cork. If an Irish law cannot touch the law of treason and treason-felony, the leaders of the Irish Parliament may easily invent new offences not called by these names, and the Parliament may impose severe penalties on anyone who attempts by act or by speech to bring the Irish Government into contempt. A new law of sacrilege may be passed which would make criticism of the Irish priesthood, or attacks on the Roman Catholic religion, or the public advocacy of Protestantism, practically impossible. . . . The legislative powers, ample as they are, of the Irish Parliament are in some respects restricted, but what the Parliament cannot accomplish by law it could accomplish by resolution. . . . Suppose that the Irish House of Commons asserts in respectful, but firm language, the right of the Irish people to establish a protective tariff; suppose that when England is engaged in a diplomatic, or an armed contest with France, the Irish House of Commons resolves that Ireland sympathises with France, that Ireland disapproves of all alliance with Germany, that she has no interest in war, and wishes to stand neutral; or suppose that, taking another line, the Irish Parliament at the approach of hostilities resolves that the People of Ireland assert their inherent right to arm volunteers, or raise an army in their own defence. No English Minister can allege with truth that these resolutions . . . are a breach of the constitution; yet . . . in many parts of Ireland they will have more than the authority of an Act of Parliament.

The Second Reading proceedings in the Lords between September 5th and September 8th saw, of course, the Government's opponents making the most of all these fears and actually venturing to contend that the Cabinet's eventual and reluctant use of the Closure in the Commons had prevented adequate discussion there.¹ Great efforts were meanwhile being made to bring the largest possible number of Peers to Westminster in the expectation that a really crushing set of Division figures against Home Rule would help to cover the Bill, and the Government responsible for it, with ridicule. And it must be admitted that the credit of the fourth Gladstone Government received few heavier blows than the final division of September 8th with its 41 votes for the Home Rule Bill and 419 against. That the Cabinet had decided in advance and, it would appear, against Gladstone's better judgement,

¹ *Hansard*, September 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th.

to undertake no immediate counter-offensive only increased the Opposition's almost indecent joy at "the powerlessness of the Government". Though there seemed much to say for the Cabinet's strategy of delaying a battle with the Lords until these should have "provoked" the English, Scottish and Welsh "democracies" as well as the Irish, this took insufficient account of the British electorate's aversion to "lack of spirit".

It may be well to indicate here how the Radical elements in politics decided to treat the rejection of Home Rule. Here is an illuminating quotation from the halfpenny Radical organ of part of the North-East, the Darlington *Northern Echo*:¹

From race-courses, rural retreats, grouse moors, watering-places; the whole, the sick, the halt and the lame of our wonderful peerage stalked or tottered to Westminster to obey Lord Salisbury's will. . . . As their debate on the Bill was a farce, so their rejection of it was a fiasco. Vexatious, gratuitous, expensive delay in the concession to Ireland of a much desired and needed reform they have inflicted . . . But their power stops there . . . Mr. Gladstone, so far from exhibiting anxiety about their lordships' vote, will learn of it on a well-earned holiday, and regard it as one of the inevitable but foreseen impediments in his path which must be surmounted. Their lordships have the same power over Mr. Gladstone as flies and mosquitoes over a sturdy wayfarer; they can annoy him, delay him, inconvenience him, but they cannot stop him. British Liberals must be patient. Ireland, under greater provocation, must be patient. It will not be for long, and after all a century of error is not to be atoned for in a day.

Here is another revealing quotation from the circular manifesto issued by the National Liberal Federation to its constituent associations:

To all true Liberals the political situation is full of encouragement. Home Rule has passed the House of Commons and, rejected by the House of Lords, is doubly certain to become law. The Ministry is strong, its supporters in Parliament are loyal, the programme is sound. Our opponents have played their last stake, and if we proceed with courage and determination, not only will the Irish question be settled, but a real era of reform will be entered upon for the democracy of the United Kingdom.

It would seem that the more Radical elements in the Government majority were not satisfied with mere words of this kind. Despite the great strain of the continuous Parliamentary strife

¹ *Northern Echo*, September 9th.

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since January 31st, some Radicals had been urging for weeks that the Session should be carried on without a break until the Lords had been forced to declare themselves not only on Home Rule, but on Employers' Liability, Parish Councils and the Equalisation of London Rates. Tories, sighing for their yachts or grouse-moors, would thus be taught a salutary lesson on the price eventually needing to be paid for such long "obstruction" as that practised against the Home Rule Bill, and more promising openings for a "great campaign" against the Peers would quickly be discovered. And a Cabinet, under special obligations to its "extremer" followers for their model diligence in the Division lobbies, had already resolved to go part of the way with them.¹ As matters were eventually arranged, Parliament, after some hurrying-on of non-contentious departmental business, was allowed to disperse, towards the end of September, for a short recess, to end, on November 2nd, with its reassembly to dispose of the Parish Councils and Employers' Liability Bills.

It is in a speech made by Gladstone in Edinburgh on September 27th that the immediate political issues of the day can best be studied. Liberal Headquarters had apparently decided that the "progressive" part of the nation needed some stimulating oratory from its "Grand Old Man" as a set-off to the discouraging loss of so much Parliamentary time and labour on the Home Rule Bill. Refreshed by a three weeks' absence from Westminster, Gladstone was allowed by his doctors to set forth his views on the political situation in a small hall to a picked audience of perhaps a thousand. As member for Midlothian, Gladstone felt it necessary to open with an apology to Scotland for the paucity of legislative result it had so far won from his Government. But if Scotland had yet obtained neither Disestablishment nor a new Local Government Bill, its case, according to Gladstone, was not peculiar and the blame must be laid on other shoulders than the Government's.

"There was a legislative famine in the land,"² said the Prime Minister in his most impressive style. "In connection with the case of Scotland came the case of Wales. Behind these stood the demands of England and of the Imperial Metropolis of London. There were the interests of the rural and mining populations. . . . With the progress and development of society new wants were continually created, for the

¹ Cf. *Northern Echo*, September 5th (London Letter), for some of the political calculations involved.

² *Ibid.*, September 28th.

creation of these wants had been more rapid than the progress of Parliament in dealing with the old ones. On the one side was the nation expressing its just demands and anxious that they should be satisfied, on the other side were the measures necessary to give them satisfaction. Between the two had arisen a great barrier, and that barrier was the Irish question. For a generation of man, or two generations—that question had taxed and burdened and mortgaged the time of Parliament in one form or another to such an extent that it had crippled essentially and effectually the whole legislative action. The Irish Question remained between them and the satisfaction of their wants. And why did it remain? Who was responsible for its remaining? That was a question which could not be evaded. That was a question which could receive one answer, and one answer alone. The responsibility for the painful state of things rested with the House of Lords.” (Cheers and a voice “Abolish them.”)

A modern eye scanning passages of this kind is apt to grow over-impatient with their almost ludicrously inadequate sociology, their complete neglect of the economic interests underlying political contention, and their total blindness to the fact that “progress” or something like it had, since the Reformation, been the catch-word used by ascending classes to justify their capture of property and privilege from classes they felt strong enough to defeat. But it would be a mistake to consider that such passages represented the whole mind even of so aged and classic a politician as Gladstone, or that Radical Cabinet Ministers of the calibre of Morley were completely unaware of the formidable criticisms possible of a Parliamentary system based on Front Benches looking to the great fortunes of the country for the wherewithal to carry on their propaganda warfare of “Ins” against “Outs”. It must be assumed, in fact, that a Morley or a Bryce had needed no excessive casuistry to grow convinced that all the concessions and artifices of “practical politics” were worth making for a chance of using the Parliamentary machine for “progressive” ends, which they approved. And Gladstone himself will be found in his speech of September 27, 1893, the last he delivered as Prime Minister outside the House of Commons,¹ to have dropped once or twice into quite a Hyde Park phraseology in encouraging his followers to persevere against the Peers who had destroyed his Home Rule Bill.

This chapter may well be ended by quoting the type of anti-Lords oratory that Gladstone considered most useful to the “progressive” cause at this stage.

¹ Cf. Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, Chronology.

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"We had now arrived," said the Prime Minister,¹ "at a crisis greater perhaps than any other that had happened since the year 1831. The House of Lords had been emboldened or misled into rejecting the Bill for the better government of Ireland. . . . There were one or two pleas most fantastic. Some said the people did not know the Bill. (Laughter.) Another pretence was that the Bill was not sufficiently discussed. (Laughter.) Why the House of Commons had allowed eighty-two days for discussion. . . . A third plea was that the House of Lords was bound by its duty to require a reference to the people, to be made by a dissolution. (Renewed laughter.) The constitution knew no such doctrine. There was no such thing upon record in any period of our history as a dissolution brought about by the House of Lords. (Cheers.) . . . The House of Lords had been prudentially restrained before, and it might be prudentially restrained again . . . that the nation would not be baffled by a phalanx of five hundred peers. (Cheers.) The Commons could not give way to the Lords although the latter bore high-sounding titles and sat in a gilded chamber. (Renewed cheers.) The next session of Parliament would not pass without our seeing that subject again appear above the waves, amidst which it had for the moment seemed to founder. Let them persevere. . . ."

¹ *Northern Echo*, September 28th.

CHAPTER X

MR. GLADSTONE DEPARTS

"I have come to be considered not only as an English but a European statesman. My name stands in Europe as a symbol of the policy of peace, moderation, and non-aggression. What would be said of my active participation in a policy that will be taken as plunging England into a whirlpool of militarism?"

Gladstone meditates resignation on the Navy's demands, January 1894.

"He revived the notion of a speedy dissolution. I said I was against it, mainly on the ground that electoral reform was the best field on which we could try a good square throw with the Lords. Everybody understands registration and the rest of it; such things come home to electors. He admitted there was some force in this, but thought that the wrecking of the work of a whole session was a neat compact sort of crime, to make the foundation of a grand charge. Thought the prospect of our living through the session extremely doubtful. I demurred. How are they to turn us out?"

Gladstone offers to lead a fight against the Peers, February 1894. (MORLEY'S *Recollections*, ii, 7.)

"I venture to tell you that, whatever reports you may read in *The Times* or in *The Scotsman*, the bulletins of the health of the present Government are those that you often receive on interesting occasions, 'as well as can be expected'. It is as well as can be expected under the circumstances that it has lost its immortal head, and it has had within ten days to replace him, to reconstitute itself, and to face Parliament. Was ever a Government placed in so terrible a difficulty? Was ever a Government met—I venture to think, in the press and in Parliament—with so little of generosity or consideration? There was an attempt made to which I have recently alluded . . . to strangle the babe in its cradle. There is, I know, a not too benevolent spirit in certain circles. . . . We trust in the generous spirit with which the country, if not Parliament, views a young Government brought into the world under such unexampled difficulties. We know that the country also will not give credit to the aspersions so sedulously put forward. . . ."

The new Premier on his difficulties, Edinburgh, March 16, 1894.

WHEN Parliament reassembled on November 2, 1893, Government members seem to have been convinced that an active, confident, forward policy would serve them better than one of compromise, tacit or avowed, with the forces that had killed their Home Rule Bill. Indeed, a large number of Gladstonian politicians, gathered at the National Liberal Club on November 1st in preparation for the resumed Parliamentary proceedings of the morrow, had ventured to undertake almost a "Socialist" intervention in the great Coal Strike that had followed on the coal-owners' attempt to bring down wages which, they claimed, had been forced up too steeply since 1888. Here is the opening resolution passed by the "Coal War Conference" of November 1st at the National Liberal Club:¹

This meeting desires to express its profound and sincere sympathy with the locked-out miners in their struggle to maintain for themselves and their families the minimum standard of living consistent with a decent existence and pledges itself to support their cause in Parliament and in the country.

And there were more resolutions of the kind, all of them giving evidence of the fixed resolve of the mass of Gladstonians not to allow themselves to be separated from the "people", whatever might be the methods employed by the newly founded Independent Labour Party or the older Social Democratic Federation to "sow discord" between the "democracy" and its middle-class friends.

"Advanced" Parliamentarians had, as will be seen, plenty of interest in the two measures for which Parliament had been reassembled, those on Parish Councils and Employers' Liability. But before their activities on these two measures are treated in detail, it might be well to see the Radical attitude on some important and even typical "questions of the day" right outside the legislative field. To show the biting condemnation undertaken of Rhodes and his Matabele War, the angry denunciation of Lord Chancellor Herschell for his reluctance to create masses of Radical and Labour magistrates to offset the overwhelming Toryism of the

¹ *Northern Echo*, November 2nd. It may be mentioned here that the reduction which the employers attempted to enforce was one of twenty-five per cent though they claimed that since 1888 wages had risen by forty per cent thanks to a trade boom that now seemed rapidly receding

existing Benches¹ and, finally, the unabashed Radical criticism still possible of the Royal Family, is assuredly to prove that so strongly rooted a plant as English Radicalism did not disappear, as some historians would almost have us believe, because there was one Jubilee in 1887, and another ten years later.

It is true, of course, that the growth of Imperialist sentiment tended to create a political atmosphere in which open and avowed "Little Englanders", scornful of the Empire, were apt to forfeit their electoral chances. But there was still plenty of standing-room in the country for critics of the force and fraud alleged to be employing the Union Jack to veil unscrupulous company-promotion in London and murderous treachery and violence in Africa. Labouchere, for instance, who had the deepest distrust of Rhodes and his Chartered Company of South Africa, as well as a pretty good idea of that Company's dubious financial prospects before its conquests in a "defensive" war against the Matabeles, announced his intention, as soon as Parliament was reassembled, to expose, what seemed to him, the Company's dark record of fraudulent concession-hunting and unscrupulous share-pushing. He intended, it is plain, to make it as difficult as possible for the Government to give way to the pressure of the Company, the City and the Conservative party, for recognition of the Company as the sovereign power over the vast areas of Matabeleland and Mashonaland, now dominated by the Company's Maxim guns.

On the morning of November 9th, the day when Labouchere

¹ Cf. *Annual Register*, 1893, Chronicle, p. 294, for one large meeting of Radical and Labour members at the House of Commons: "No reporters were present, but it subsequently transpired that the language used by several of the speakers was more vigorous than Parliamentary." After this meeting had appealed to Mr. Gladstone over the Lord Chancellor's head and had received an answer seeking to turn away its wrath, there was more activity. The *Annual Register* reports: "This letter having been duly considered by the Radical Committee, after some discussion, Mr. Storey (their Chairman), Sir Charles Dilke and Messrs. Dodd, Halley Stewart, and Maden, were entrusted with the task of drafting a reply, which was adopted, and of which the most definitely expressed part ran as follows: 'That there may be no misapprehension as to what we desire we beg to put on record the following statements: (1) That so long as there are unpaid magistrates or pending some drastic and most necessary change in the method of appointment, the bench should be made and kept fairly representative of all classes of opinion. (2) We say that so long as appointments remain as they are now, mainly political, fair play requires that there should be substantial numerical equality or due proportion between the parties, wherever eligible persons are available. (3) That public activity in the Liberal cause should no longer be a virtual bar to the county bench. (4) That dissent from the Church of England should no longer substantially be a bar to the county bench, as in many cases it has been. (5) That the fact that a man is in trade should no longer be a bar, etc.'"

Mr. Gladstone Departs

intended to move the adjournment in order to bring on his motion against the South Africa Company, even the *Daily News* expressed some doubts as to his ability to find the necessary forty members willing to take the risks of helping him to secure his adjournment.¹ And, in fact, some of the essentials of the situation had now been thoroughly overlaid by enthusiastic Press treatment of the successful "valour" displayed by small parties of Company troops against hordes of Matabeles, by denunciation of the alleged horrors once inflicted by the Matabeles upon the Mashonas, and by facile optimism as to the speed and benevolence with which the Company would endow even the bloodthirsty Matabeles, after they were pacified, with the "blessings of civilisation".² Yet as events turned out, "when the question was put from the chair, nearly the whole of the Ministerialists sprang to their feet together with the bulk of the Irish members. . . . The benches on both sides were crowded . . . the public galleries were full . . . while there was a good sprinkling of noble lords in the peers' gallery."³ And Labouchere's damaging attack, even though criticised by the Government, denounced by the Opposition, and explained away by a well-assorted group of private members, did at least show

¹ Cf. *Daily News*, November 9th.

² Cf. *The Times*, November 10th, for an editorial depicting the growing callousness of Imperialism at its worst. Here is an extract: "Some thousands of Lobenguela's warriors have been killed by the Company's forces, but in their absence the normal raiding and slaughtering of Lobenguela's impis would have disposed of a large number of natives to whom life is equally dear. There is nothing more cruel than ill-regulated sentiment. Let compassionate souls who weep over Matabele slain consider the wrongs that these amiable personages inflicted upon defenceless Mashonas. Perhaps they may then by degrees learn to have some compassion for white men of their own race who would some day have been massacred wholesale had they failed to look after their own defences."

But callousness of this type offends the modern eye, perhaps, less than the nauseating talk of the "blessings of civilisation" which Company apologists employed. Because, forsooth, the Company had considerable plans for railway and telegraph lines which would assist European exploitation of the newly conquered country, some Fleet Street journalists began painting roseate pictures of a Matabeleland shortly to be converted into a Heaven on Earth. Another and more naked appeal to the selfishness of the British taxpayer and the possible British emigrant may best be studied in a House of Commons speech delivered on November 9th by a Company apologist, Maguire:

"Considerably over £800,000", he said, "had been spent; a white colony had been established in Mashonaland, and a system of government set up. A new country had been added to those to which British colonists could go: a railway had been built through British Bechuanaland . . . a telegraph line had been erected up to the capital of Mashonaland and preparations made to extend the telegraph farther still; a new road had been opened up into the interior of Africa . . . and other things had been done which were advantageous from the Imperial point of view. All this had not cost the English taxpayer one farthing. (Hear, hear). . . ."

³ *Northern Echo*, November 10th (London Letter).

how justifiable was Radical watchfulness in regard to all those laying special claims to "patriotism" and Empire enthusiasm.¹

For such Radical watchfulness, too, further employment was found almost immediately in discounting the alleged new "naval scare" that was being worked up by the quarters most closely associated with Imperialism. Here is one provincial Radical daily on a panic alleged to be the more unjustifiable since England was outbuilding suspect France and Russia combined:²

The long-suffering British taxpayer—will do well to take note that the old familiar wails over the insufficiency of the British navy and the cry for large and immediate expenditure upon it were again to be heard in the land. *The Times* has undertaken the task of "rousing the attention of the country to the imperative need of a new and enlarged naval programme". . . . The theory of the naval alarmists is simple. We are to treat every naval Power as a potential enemy, and take upon ourselves the burden of maintaining sea-forces equal to any possible combination among them. *The Times* has, however, made a new discovery. France and Russia each expend more than the total value of their merchant fleets on their navy every year. We on the other hand with a merchant fleet valued at £122,000,000, only expend a beggarly eighteen millions or so. . . . This single fact must, in the opinion of *The Times* "excite the gravest uneasiness in every patriotic mind". . . . The prospect of programmes which is opened up is simply endless. . . .

It must be left to a later part of this chapter to explain how the "wails of the naval alarmists" affected Gladstone's Board of Admiralty and enforced his own resignation. Here it is best to recount the strength still displayed in 1893 by one of Radicalism's most deeply rooted instincts—suspicion of the financial and other demands of the Royal House. In August 1893, in pursuance of family arrangements,³ the Duke of Edinburgh, Queen Victoria's

¹ *Northern Echo*, Editorial: "Another famous victory has been gained in South Africa. . . . British arms have again triumphed over a savage horde poorly equipped for the fight. We can hardly imagine that the most excitable Jingoese can feel any solid gratification. . . . At the best the operations in Matabeleland are to be regarded as a disagreeable and not very heroic necessity. At the worst they are not distinguishable from murder and rapine. Mr. Labouchere takes the worst possible view of the Chartered Company and its doings. . . . If Mr. Labouchere's strictures are too severe, still the panegyrics which the Company's friends lavish on it are much too high-pitched. . . . It is bare trifling with the question to attempt to persuade the public that this Chartered Company is animated by the pure spirit of philanthropy. Maxim guns and repeating rifles are not civilising agencies. . . ."

² *Ibid.*, November 14, 1893.

³ It had long been arranged that when the Prince Consort's elder brother died as he did in August 1893, the succession should not go to the Prince Consort's eldest son, the Prince of Wales, but to his second, the Duke of Edinburgh.

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"sailor son", became a reigning German Prince as Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. He had apparently received a vast dowry when marrying the only daughter of Tsar Alexander II in 1874, and now in August 1893, when becoming a vassal of the Emperor of Germany, he succeeded to one of the greater German princely fortunes. Before the adjournment of Parliament in September, therefore, broad Radical hints were given that the new German Prince, when laying down his British nationality, would also be expected to lay down his British State incomes including one he had long enjoyed as an Admiral.¹ In view of simultaneous Radical criticism of suspected Court manœuvres to prepare the way for the Queen's "soldier son", the Duke of Connaught, to succeed the royal Duke of Cambridge as Commander-in-Chief, a graceful Court retreat on the Edinburgh incomes might well have forwarded the Queen's long-cherished ambition for the Duke of Connaught, already raised to the Aldershot Command.² But the Queen, who pertinaciously held to the view that she and her family had always been treated unfairly and ungraciously by Parliament, was unable to rise to the height of the financial abnegation required and insisted on retaining an income of £10,000 for her son. Though Gladstone made the most of the case for the Duke when telling Parliament, on December 21st, of the £15,000 per annum and the Admiralty emoluments he was laying down, a Radical challenge raised a division of 59 votes against 177. And how even "sensible Radical" newspapers tended to treat the subject may be learnt from such an editorial as the following:³

The Duke of Edinburgh . . . has not given up the 10,000 (per annum) settled on him on his marriage . . . (He) is himself a wealthy man . . . married to a lady who was one of the great heiresses of Europe. . . . It does seem that he might have been allowed to pursue his further career (as Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha) without expense to the country. . . . Ten thousand is not a great sum relatively to the Budget of the British Empire; but it is a sum with which much might be done. It would be sufficient, for instance, to support more than thirty working men as

¹ Cf. *Northern Echo*, September 13th, for the Devonport M.P., Kearley, asking pertinaciously in Parliament for the number of days the Duke of Edinburgh had taken as leave when serving as Admiral Commanding at Devonport.

² Cf. *Hansard*, September 11th, for Radical attacks on the Duke of Connaught's appointment to Aldershot. Radicals who had been complaining for over thirty years of the Duke of Cambridge as unenlightened, unprogressive and undemocratic, meant to make another appointment from the Royal Family impossible.

³ *Northern Echo*, December 22, 1893.

M.P.s, and it is a sum which ought not to be lavished on a Prince already enormously rich, who has voluntarily accepted a position which one day may bring him into conflict with the land of his birth.

But it is certainly time to return to the main Governmental business before Parliament. On November 7th the Cabinet's Parish Councils Bill received its Second Reading without a Division though ample notice had been given, during the debate, that the Opposition had all manner of objections to raise, first, in Committee and ultimately in the House of Lords.¹ The optimistic Radical dream of establishing, in every rural parish with over two hundred inhabitants, not merely a democratic village legislature in the Parish Meeting but an elective village executive in the Parish Council struck older Tories as almost midsummer madness. If it was not politic to say so, in public, for fear of offending the farm-labouring voter, it was still possible to deny altogether the need for anything more than Parish Meetings in villages of under five hundred inhabitants. And even in the larger villages, Tories were hardly happy in the thought of Parish Councillors' possible activities. They foresaw much attempted "reclaiming" of charities from the incumbent and rights of way from the landowner; much artful planning to obtain the statutory free use of the National schoolroom on every possible occasion; and much "unnecessary" putting into force of all the varied powers, suggested for Parish Councils, from the provision of fire-engines and fire-escapes to the acquisition of parochial parks and office-buildings. It is, perhaps, hardly surprising if Tories attempted to restrain parish "extravagance" both by narrow and precise rating limits and by demands that only those paying rates direct should be qualified for membership of the Parish Council.

The demand for qualifications giving assurance that those having authority to spend the rates had no interest in "extravagance", but rather the reverse, was even keener on other parts of the Bill. The Parish Councils Bill, it should be remembered, was more than a Bill to substitute one-man, one-vote Parish Meetings

¹ Cf. *Northern Echo*, November 8th: "This is not a reform congenial to the Tory mind and though the party have learned at last that open opposition to popular principles does not pay, still they can take their favourite course of opposing on side issues. They pretend to be democrats, but somehow when a democratic proposal is made they always find that it comes at the wrong time, or is in the wrong form, or ought to be postponed until something else . . . can be taken along with it."

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for plural voting Vestries, to give them greater powers, and to institute Parish Councils with far larger authority in lay concerns than had ever been exercised by Rector and Churchwardens. It was also a Bill for reorganising other parts of the local government of the country under democratic Urban and Rural District Councils (to be chosen on a new basis of one man, one vote and the abolition of "property" qualifications) as well as a Bill for democratising similarly the Poor Law Guardians. In the case of the Poor Law Guardians, the increase of whose rating demands was specially feared,¹ the uneasiness excited by the suggested abolition of plural suffrage and "property" qualification² was increased by the proposed abolition of the "ex officio" membership hitherto allowed to the local J.P.s. Before long Tories were openly aiming at forcing the Government to give up the Bill's "Poor Law Clauses" in return for the promise of Tory "reasonableness" about the rest of the Bill.

Of the long struggle that raged between the Gladstonians and the Tories on the Parish Councils Bill, little more can here be said than on the parallel struggle raging over the Tory insistence on forcing "contracting out" into the Employers' Liability Bill. On the Parish Councils Bill the Tory strategy was to draw up hundreds of amendments intended to force the Government either to use the Closure drastically in Committee or, alternatively, to surrender their hopes of proroguing before Christmas. If the Closure were used as drastically against alleged Tory obstructionists as the Radicals demanded, Ministers feared that the Lords would have a much stronger case for making wholesale changes. On the other hand, the Tory price for a pruning of their amendments, bringing with it the hope of a prorogation before Christmas and a normal 1894 Session, was one that Radicals refused to let the Government consider—a surrender of the "Poor Law Clauses" democratising the Guardians' elections. And so, on December 10th, at the end of the sixth Parliamentary week since the House of Commons had reassembled on November 2nd, members were engaged in a Saturday sitting and a struggle of endurance in Committee on a

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, November 7th, for Balfour's speech as Leader of the Opposition.

² Cf. *English Radicalism, 1853-1886*, pp. 388-9, for the twelve votes that could be thrown by one man who was an owner-occupier of property of sufficient rateable value. To be qualified to act as Guardian, a man in some districts might need to be in occupation of premises of £40 rateable value, and in none was the qualification lower than £15 rateable value.

relatively early Section of the Parish Councils Bill.¹ It is not surprising to learn that in debates ending in a compromise at 8.30 p.m. between two sets of politicians equally anxious for dinner, "the discussion became very acrid at times but good Radicals like Sir Robert Reid and Sir Osborne Morgan begged the Government to sit tight, the latter heroically declaring that he was prepared to eat his Christmas dinner in Parliament rather than let obstruction be triumphant. . . ."²

Gladstonian members were, in fact, only released for the briefest of Christmas adjournments, separating on Friday December 22nd and resuming the wearing struggle on December 27th. Here is one angry Radical comment on the Government's continued reluctance to make much use of the Closure:³

How long? How long? is the question which Liberals all over the country are putting themselves with reference to the abominable procrastination of the proceedings on the Parish Councils Bill. If the tail be allowed to wag the dog much longer, Mr. Gladstone's problem will be, not how to save the present Session from barrenness but how to prevent the next from sharing a similar fate. . . . Another attempt was made to retain plural voting last night, and yet another to saddle the new authorities with the irritating and disappointing cumulative vote. There is in fact no end to the resources of retrograde politicians intent on obstruction, and the angry citizen may well wonder at the patience of the Government and ask "How long?"

And if the Third Reading of the Parish Councils Bill was at last completed on January 12th and "progressive" legislators were free to depart from Westminster for a month, it was still certain that difficult problems would face them on their return. The House of Commons had been adjourned until February 12, 1894, to allow the Lords to deal both with the Parish Councils Bill and with the Commons' refusal to have "contracting out" forced into the Employers' Liability Bill.⁴ It was possible, even probable, that

¹ The section that became Section 14 of a Bill with 89 Sections and 3 Schedules. The struggle turned in part on the Parish Charities and the qualifications to be required of the Trustees appointed by the Parish Council.

² *Northern Echo*, December 12th.

³ *Ibid.*, December 29th.

⁴ Cf. *Hansard*, December 8th, for the Lords' amendments and December 20th for the rejection of "contracting out" by the Commons after a firm and much-applauded speech from the Minister in charge, Mr. Asquith. A Government majority reaching 62, was the more satisfactory in that some Government supporters had urged the need of meeting the views of those workmen and employers who were content with existing arrangements. Fortunately the Lords' amendment had been too strong for these Government supporters and they had voted with Mr. Asquith.

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a political crisis of some magnitude would develop in consequence of the action expected from the Peers, and Radicals desired to be ready for the "appeal to the people" that seemed inevitable before long. It might well be that the Lords would destroy the Parish Councils and Employers' Liability Bills by insisting on large and unacceptable mutilations and amendments. The Government counter-strategy, advocated by many Radicals, was a quick winding-up of the Session that had already lasted since Parliament had been gathered, early in 1893, for the Home Rule Bill, and the holding of a new short Session with a "democratic" Budget as its leading feature. This Budget should increase the taxes payable by landowners and the rich while offering "long overdue" remissions of taxation to the poor. And if the Peers with dubious constitutionality chose to add to their sins by destroying the Budget too, the ground would have been well-prepared for a Dissolution and a "democratic" triumph bringing, in its train, the moral authority to "end or mend the Lords".

Here is a report of what Radical members were busy with before they left Westminster after the Third Reading of the Parish Councils Bill:¹

A memorial signed by nearly one hundred Radical members has been presented to Sir William Harcourt, praying him to make his Budget one of drastic financial reform by graduating the income tax, and increasing and graduating the duties on personal property passing at death, and equalising those duties on personal and real property. If these suggestions are adopted the memorialists contend that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be able to make tea, coffee, cocoa and dried fruits duty free, to provide funds for making the Government a model employer of labour both as regards hours and wages, to pay members of Parliament and the cost of elections, to extend national education and improve the position of the aged and deserving poor, to provide for the deficit in the national finances and for any expenditure necessary to strengthen the navy. . . .

The delight of the Radical election strategists in planning such a Budget must have been greater from the thought of the probably fatal blow it would inflict upon the "disruptive" efforts of the Independent Labour Party and of the possibly decisive wedge it might drive between Lord Salisbury and Mr. Chamberlain, whose plans of 1885 had been heavily drawn upon by the Radical Budget-makers.

¹ *Northern Echo*, January 15, 1894.

While Harcourt, at the Exchequer, was wondering how much of the Radical plan he could safely incorporate into his Budget and calling upon Alfred Milner, the able and relatively youthful Chairman of the Inland Revenue Board, for assistance,¹ the Peers had met to deal with the Employers' Liability Bill and the Parish Councils Bill. On January 29th Lord Salisbury demonstrated that he saw no cause to fear the worst the Radicals could do on a subject on which the working classes could be represented as divided and in regard to which a number of Government supporters in the Commons were unconvinced. But if he led a majority of 125 Peers against 22 in insisting on a re-insertion of "contracting out" in the Employers' Liability Bill, it was doubtful wisdom in him to indulge in one of his "blazing indiscretions" and, while complaining of the Government's alleged subservience to the trade unions, also stigmatise those unions as "a cruel organisation" because they opposed "contracting out". After the Peers had gone on, between February 1st and 8th, to action upon the Parish Councils Bill, denounced under such Radical headlines as "Peers and Parishes. A destructive night's work"² and "The Lords and the Bill. More Butchery",³ the Gladstonian leaders thought their counter-appeal to the "people" could be effectively addressed alike to the trade unionist and the rural labourer.

The scene chosen for public Gladstonian denunciation of the Peers was the Portsmouth meeting of the National Liberal Federation. On February 13th one Cabinet Minister with special claims on "progressive" gratitude, Mr. Acland of the Education Department,⁴ produced an astonishing amount of enthusiasm among the party stalwarts by declaring that every important amendment suggested by the Lords would be negatived in the Commons, and by repeating choice oratorical gems, in denunciation of the Peers, from the past speeches of Liberal-Unionists, now allied with Lord

¹ Cf. Lord Crewe's *Rosebery* for the view that the Budget of 1894 "was the work of Alfred Milner" which was hardly fair to Harcourt. Milner had reached his position at the Inland Revenue Board in 1892 at the age of thirty-eight though after unique experience as Private Secretary to Goschen at the Exchequer between 1887 and 1889, and Egyptian Under-Secretary of Finance at Cairo between 1889 and 1892. Milner had a Liberal past as a writer for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and as a Liberal candidate in 1885.

² *Northern Echo*, February 2nd.

³ *Ibid.*, February 7th.

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, November 27, 1893, for the claim that Mr. Acland's work was making "Free Education" a reality and *Hansard*, December 22, 1893, for the increase of evening schools, under his new Regulations, from 1,977 to 3,147. He was a "Fabian" favourite.

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Salisbury.¹ Amid great hilarity from the assembled faithful, Sir Henry James was quoted as calling the Upper House "an additional wing of the Carlton Club" and Mr. Goschen as calling it "a permanent Conservative and High Tory Committee". And from the oratory of Birmingham was culled Mr. Chamberlain's denunciation of the Upper House majority as "arbitrary without judgement, arrogant without knowledge" and Mr. Jesse Collings's "For my part I demand their total abolition."

But Mr. Acland's speech was only intended to be the precursor of a more authoritative one to be delivered on the following night by Sir William Harcourt. Quotations from this speech of February 14th are worth giving at some length in order to show what line the most influential House of Commons man in the Cabinet after Gladstone himself, thought it wise to take at this juncture:

"The proceedings of the House of Lords of late," declaimed Harcourt, "had left no manner of doubt as to the spirit in which the temporal peers and the spiritual peers are resolved to use and abuse to the utmost the powers which they possessed. The cynical speech of Lord Salisbury had revealed the contemptuous . . . selfishness with which the majority of the peers were determined to trample upon all interests except their own. In Lord Salisbury's words the trades unions were 'a cruel organisation'. What was the adjective that should apply to the organisation of which Lord Salisbury was the head. The trades unions had done more to elevate the condition and improve the state of the great mass of the labouring people than all the peers of the realm had ever done. (Cheers.) Nothing was more deplorable than the attitude taken by the bench of bishops. 'Property, property, property' was the chant of the Lords temporal: 'Amen' cried the Lords spiritual. (Laughter.) Property! Property! Property! Privilege! Privilege! Exclusion! Exclusion! Exclusion! was their matins and their evensong." (Cheers and laughter.)²

This was plain bidding for the Trade Union and Dissenting vote and heavy punishment, indeed, of the Bishops for attempting, in the Parish Councils Bill, to keep, with Lord Salisbury's aid, too many parochial charities under clerical control. But Harcourt's peroration is even better worth giving because it shows that the Cabinet had taken a definite decision against immediate Dissolution, a

¹ The *Northern Echo*, February 14th, speaks of the meeting as "electrified" and next day the editorial column wrote: "Mr. Acland has delighted the souls of the delegates at Portsmouth and evoked such a demonstration of enthusiasm as is seldom seen or heard in a public gathering. . . . The Government must adopt this uncompromising policy all round, it is no use getting up steam in the informal Parliament at Portsmouth if it is blown off to waste at Downing Street."

² *Ibid.*, February 15th.

decision with momentous consequences for the next decade of British politics. This was Harcourt's closing passage:

The last fortnight's work of the House of Lords had marvellously opened the eyes of the people and advanced public opinion. Give them rope enough. (Cheers.) Let us have a few more such fortnights; let the thing permeate the minds of the people; let the handwriting on the wall be clear . . . let it be burnt into the minds and the consciences of the people that the House of Lords was the champion of all abuses, and the enemy of all reform; let the object lessons be many, and let the moral be flagrant. Let them send the Lords bill after bill, let them maul, and mangle, and mutilate, and defeat them, for it was their nature to, and then when the cup was full and the time was ripe, the verdict of the people should be taken on the general issue, and they should determine once for all whether what Lord Russell called "the whisper of a faction" should prevail over the will of the people. (Loud cheers.)

It is now known that Gladstone in the last weeks of his Prime Ministership advised a different policy. On January 13th, the day after the Commons had finally passed the Parish Councils Bill and adjourned, the aged statesman had left for Biarritz to recuperate and to consider his future course. He had been attempting to make a stand in the Cabinet against what he considered to be alarmist Admiralty claims for new naval construction, but he had been out-voted by colleagues,¹ who either shared the Admiralty view or thought that resistance to it might bring political catastrophe to the party. To Biarritz had, however, come news tempting the Prime Minister to consider whether he ought not to accept various compromises, which had been suggested on Admiralty policy, so that he might be able to devote the last strength he had to a final political effort. Hearing, first, of the renewed "mutilation" by the Lords of the Employers' Liability Bill and then of their "butchery" of the Parish Councils Bill, Gladstone had written to London inviting the Cabinet to resolve on a Dissolution.² But at

¹ Morley's *Gladstone* (ed. 1908), ii, 559-61. In Parliament Gladstone had already, when meeting a Conservative motion alleging great new naval construction by France and Russia needing big and immediate counter-construction on the British part, taken a line not very welcome to the Admiralty. He had pointed out, for instance, that the existing British naval tonnage at 527,000 tons far exceeded that of France and Russia combined at 318,000 and that the quality and condition of the British ships were superior (*Hansard*, December 19th).

² Morley's *Gladstone* quotes the Prime Minister's own memorandum: "I suggested dissolution to my colleagues in London, where half, or more than half, the cabinet were found at the moment. I received by telegraph a hopelessly adverse reply." The story may be completed from Crewe's *Rosebery*, ii, 437, and

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a hastily gathered meeting of the half-dozen Cabinet Ministers available, not a single one shared the veteran's desire for an instant fight with the Lords or his confidence in a favourable result. The policy of "filling the cup" was adopted instead, and when the Prime Minister returned on February 10th he could not but conclude that his usefulness was drawing to an end. So as not to incommode his colleagues while they were winding up a long and disappointing Session, begun as early as January 31, 1893, he did not resign until they had taken their last decision, on the quarrel with the Lords over the Employers' Liability Bill and the Parish Councils Bill. But when they had decided to announce the abandonment of the Employers' Liability Bill on February 20th, throwing the blame upon the Lords, and when, on March 1st, they had completed, after a fortnight of struggle, a compromise with the Lords on the Parish Councils Bill, Gladstone was ready to withdraw. On March 3rd, two days before the last formalities of the Session of 1893-4 were ended, the Prime Minister resigned.

History seems to have decided that, despite the unfortunate results of Gladstone's Dissolutions in 1874 and 1886, he was in 1894 more in the right than his colleagues. It is agreed that it was, perhaps, more than likely that the small Government majority gained in 1892 would have been wiped out. But it is agreed also that the old veteran's prestige and personality were still such as to make him a priceless asset in any electoral battle into which he was ready to throw himself with zeal. Even, therefore, if the Government had been defeated, Gladstone's personal participation in the intended crusade against the Lords would have ensured the return of a much stronger Parliamentary Opposition to Conservatism than eventually resulted from the disastrous General Election of 1895.¹ The course of the decade 1895-1905 must have been considerably affected in consequence.

Morley's *Recollections*, ii, 1-10, which last, indeed, shows how Gladstone resisted being forced into resignation, in January, on the naval question in the hope of being required against the Lords in February.

¹ Garvin's *Chamberlain*, ii, 592, has a passage on the chances weighed above, the more interesting from the fact that he was discussing the question as a contemporary leader-writer in the *Newcastle Chronicle* of 1894. He writes of Gladstone: "His appeal on the historic case of 'the Peers *versus* the people', though full of doubt and hazard like all memorable enterprises, would have been by far the best chance—while not a conquering chance—that Liberalism was to know for a dozen years to come, or that Home Rule was to know for twenty. Early in February the Prime Minister still felt, though pointing to his eyes, that 'he had strength enough and physique enough for the fight with the Lords', if only the Peers would complete the tale of their iniquities by assassinating the

Gladstone's retirement did the greater harm to the "cause of progress" from the unfortunate Rosebery Premiership which it precipitated. Rosebery, it is true, seemed to have a popularity in Scotland and in London which promised to be most useful electorally. Nevertheless clever men like Morley, Asquith and Acland made a fatal mistake for their party when, embittered by Harcourt's occasionally outrageous temper, they took, not measures to bring him to reason, but measures which placed a Peer at the head of a party engaged in denouncing the Lords.¹ The contradictions involved put the party in difficulties almost at once,² and worse difficulties flowed from the fact that Rosebery did not share, and could hardly appreciate, some of the party's most deeply rooted sentiments. Rosebery might have enjoyed playing to an admiring audience the part of "Citizen" Rosebery, Chairman of the London County Council, and later, in November 1893, that of the successful if amateur Conciliator who "ended" the great Coal Strike. But the passionate hatred of predatory Imperialism which possessed the great Radical bulk of the Gladstonian party awoke little echo in the new Prime Minister, a warm admirer of Rhodes.³ Again, the fervour of the Puritan sentiment which animated those Liberal bulwarks, the Dissenting ministers and congregations, when they campaigned against betting and horse-racing in the Anti-Gambling League, was remote from a Prime Minister of great wealth, who won one Derby in 1894 and another in 1895. Finally, a Prime Minister who had never sat in the House of Commons was under a special disadvantage when attempting to deal with conditions which were constantly threatening to upset the precarious majority in the Lower House on which the Ministry rested.

The disadvantages of the Rosebery Ministry were, in fact, made very plain as soon as the Cabinet faced Parliament for a new Session on March 12, 1894. On the Session's very first night the Parish Councils Bill. But the sagacity of Liberal-Unionist policy guided by Chamberlain had induced the Peers severely to restrain themselves on the question of democratic government in rural districts and parishes. . . ."

¹ Morley's *Recollections*, ii, pp. 11-16, give an account that seems to show that the three Cabinet Ministers from the Commons mentioned above, working with Lords Spencer and Rosebery, decided the issue, presumably by threatening a joint resignation if a Harcourt Premiership were attempted. The Queen was known to be eager to send for Lord Rosebery rather than suffer a Harcourt Prime Ministership.

² Cf. *Hansard*, March 13th, for a Government defeat engineered by the disgusted Labouchere at the head of the "Republican" wing.

³ Cf. Crewe's *Rosebery*, ii, 565, 600. It was during Rosebery's Prime Ministership that Rhodes was made a Privy Councillor.

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Premier, offered Lord Salisbury's congratulations in the Lords, allowed himself to be drawn into a seeming acceptance of the view that there were no prospects for Home Rule until England, "as the predominant member of the partnership of the three kingdoms" was "convinced of its justice".¹ Irish members in the Commons, already subjected to the serious strain of finding no Home Rule Bill on the Sessional agenda,² needed a great deal of persuading not to make a crisis of a phrase that was most unhappy in its apparent denial to Ireland of a decisive voice in its own destinies.³ Meanwhile Labouchere, whose protests against the imposition of a "Peer Premier" on a democratic party had been ignored by the ruling Cabinet Junta, was staging an effective retort. On March 13th he carried, with the aid of Radicals and Irishmen, an amendment to the Rosebery Government's Address, praying for the abolition of the Lords' legislative powers.⁴ After two such mishaps the Rosebery Cabinet was fortunate indeed to fare no worse than it did in the by-elections, necessitated by the change of Government. But if the quick collapse of the Ministry, forecast by some too confident Tories, did not, in fact, take place, a fatal canker nevertheless began gnawing at the Cabinet's heart from the moment of Rosebery's appearance as Prime Minister. Harcourt's resentment at being passed over for one very much his political junior was strong and bitter. As leader of the Commons it was often in his power to thwart and humiliate his nominal chief in the Lords and he took much advantage of his opportunity.⁵

¹ *Lord Rosebery's Speeches, 1874-1896*, p. 155.

² "Ireland" was being offered an Evicted Tenants Bill instead, with the promise from Morley that a Home Rule Bill would be introduced at the first practicable moment.

³ Morley's *Recollections*, ii, 21, have under the date March 13, 1894: "The Irish in wild state of perturbation, anger, and panic at the unhappy sentence in the Lords. I did my best *motos componere fluctus*."

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22, for the "wild exaltation of Radicals and Irish" after their victorious Division of 147-145.

⁵ Cf. Crewe's *Rosebery*, ii, 465-9, for the speedy opening of a quarrel on Harcourt's Radical Budget of 1894. Harcourt took some of Rosebery's objections very badly and "enjoyed giving rein to his powers of provocation by implying" that they "merely came from a rich man who disliked being taxed". As for Harcourt's right-hand man, his son Lewis, "throughout this brief Government Lewis Harcourt's part was to glorify his father's great financial achievement. It was not his business to help the Government as a whole, in the lobbies or elsewhere—and it was tempting to dismiss the Prime Minister and one or two of his colleagues as unworthy leaders of the party."

CHAPTER XI

THE ROSEBERY GOVERNMENT, 1894-5

"We boast of our free institutions. We swell as we walk abroad and survey less fortunate countries. We make broad the phylacteries of freedom upon our foreheads. We thank God that we are not as other less favoured men are, and all the time we endure this mockery of freedom. You are bound hand and foot. You may vote, and vote till you are black in the face. It will not change the face of matters at all; still the House of Lords will control at its will the measures of your representatives; still you will have to go hat in hand to the House of Lords to ask it to pass your measures, in however mutilated a shape they may wish."

Rosebery campaigns against the Lords at Bradford, October 27, 1894.

"November 15, 1894.—If as I think is almost certain, a dissolution should bring back the Unionist party to power they will be immediately confronted with the necessity of producing a positive programme. . . . Elections are carried by the shifting vote of a minority, who do not strictly belong to either party. The working classes are not divided on party lines as absolutely as the upper and middle classes, and my experience is that very large numbers do not actually make up their minds till the time of election comes round and are then very much influenced by the issues presented to them at the moment. Gladstonianism has been a failure. If Unionism or Conservatism gives them the promise of better results they will come over in large numbers and turn a small into a sweeping majority."

Chamberlain urges a Programme of Social Reforms upon Salisbury.

"There is one thing above all others which irritates and disgusts the Home Rule Liberal. That is the suggestion that the ordinary working man does not regard the Gladstonian party as the party to which he naturally and necessarily belongs. . . . Are there any *a priori* grounds for thinking that he will naturally become a Gladstonian? We will suppose for the sake of argument that the working man is a person of discontented mind and inclined to range himself against those above him in the social scale. Would that throw him into the arms of the Gladstonians? Most assuredly not. If he let his dislike of those above him be his guide, he would become a Tory, for in all

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probability the majority of the people above him in his own immediate circle would be Gladstonians. People are apt to talk as if the working man, when he thought of the rich, thought of some conspicuous duke, or of this or that millionaire. But in most instances these are to him mere shadows. . . . When the working man thinks of the rich he thinks of his employer, of the big general dealer in his quarter of the town, of the miller or middleman who has thriven. . . . But these visible, tangible rich men, the rich men of the workman's four-mile radius . . . the pushing successful men of business in a small way are generally inclined to the Home Rule side. . . ."

ST. LOE STRACHEY in the *Nineteenth Century*, February 1895.

IN the Queen's Speech with which a new Parliamentary Session had been opened on March 12, 1894, the Rosebery Government had found it necessary to promise every Gladstonian section the Bill or Bills by which it set particular store. And after the early mishaps of March 12th and 13th very special emphasis had to be laid on the great benefits thus held out to sections of the Gladstonian majority, capable of mutiny, because considering themselves neglected. Here is the new Prime Minister himself, on March 17th, attempting at Edinburgh to improve on his very shaky start:¹

The first session of the present Parliament was an Irish session; the second session was an English session; and I think it is not unfair to ask that the third session shall have a good deal of Scotland and Wales. For Wales you have a Disestablishment Bill, which is their only Bill, which they press forward with an energy and a passion which leave nothing to be desired. . . . But I think we have a very ample Budget for Scotland. In the first place, Scotland will share in the new Registration Bill, which will put an end to the inequalities of the suffrage. . . . If Scotland could get that Bill as the result of this session she would be able to say to herself that she had passed many more unfruitful sessions than this. But I would next press on your attention the fact that at the earliest possible moment a Local Government Bill will be introduced for Scotland, which will extend to your villages and your parishes in a simple and inexpensive form . . . the advantages of the Parish Councils Bill for England. For the Highlands we offer a Bill which will extend the benefits of the Crofters Act to leaseholders. For the miners and for those engaged in industrial pursuits we shall offer a Bill, which you will all understand here, for a public inquiry into fatal accidents in industrial pursuits. We shall also approach and deal with a question which to many here comes first of all, the question of the Disestablishment of the Church of Scotland. There are, I think, two great principles in which we should be guided in dealing with the Church of Scotland. One is that of great tenderness and great indulgence . . . and the other is that in dealing with the endowments they should not be torn from the places which pay them and which are really interested in their maintenance and care, and applied to found some great central institution in Edinburgh, Glasgow, or Dundee; but that they should remain parochial endowments for local and parochial and beneficent purposes. . . . There is one Bill, which though not mentioned in the Queen's Speech and though not a Government Bill . . . the Government are determined, not as a Government, but with a great mass, if not the unanimity of the Government support, to give every facility to. I mean the Miners' Eight Hours Bill. . . .

¹ *Lord Rosebery's Speeches, 1874-1896*, pp. 169-74.

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The Edinburgh speech was, of course, specially directed at winning the sympathy and confidence of Radical and "Labour" Scotland. But other sections of the Government majority had obtained offers and concessions of similar magnitude, the Irish Nationalists, an Evicted Tenants Bill certain to rouse the Lords to fury; the Temperance men, a renewal of the Local Veto Bill as a Government measure; the Welsh Radicals, a Bill for disestablishing and disendowing the Church of England in Wales; and the "Labour" men, the actual grant of the Eight Hour Day at Woolwich Arsenal. And here is Lord Rosebery, on March 21st, recalling to the powerful "Radical Socialism" of London, entrenched in the London County Council, what it had already obtained and what was yet to come. After a reminder that, in granting a Royal Commission on the Unification of London, the Government had helped the London County Council's prospects of becoming a real Municipality and beating off dangerous Conservative schemes threatening its very existence,¹ the Prime Minister went on:

If you had obtained that alone you would have done well by the present Government. But what did you get besides? . . . you got a very good slice out of the Parish Councils (Bill). You got the freedom of your vestries;² you got the free election of your guardians; you got an extension of your powers. . . . You have got also a Bill which is to be introduced in a week or ten days, as I understand—a Bill for the equalisation of rates.³ We did not get it through before, but . . . have nailed the Bill to the mast, and we intend to carry the vessel that bears it into port. Lastly, there was the constant support you got for your proposals for betterment and additional powers. I know that these do not satisfy ardent London reformers. . . . I do not regret that discontent. . . . I view all that has been done by yourselves in administration and in the effort to promote principles of legislation, as important . . . the State is endeavouring to become a model employer of labour itself. . . . I believe it was Mr. Acland, who has done so much for the people in so short a time,

¹ Tories, who were very afraid of expanding the powers of the existing "Socialist" County Council, had another scheme than that of "developing" London by merely allowing it to absorb or take control of the management of the local services rendered by the 23 Vestries, the 15 District Boards, and the City Corporation. Under one plan favoured by the Opposition the 39 local Metropolitan Authorities, named above, would have been replaced by six or seven larger municipalities, independent of the London County Council and capable of absorbing its functions.

² By the Parish Councils Act the metropolitan vestries (corresponding in some degree to the Metropolitan Borough Councils of today) had been freed from the vestryman qualification, the *ex-officio* chairmanship of the Parish Incumbent and the *ex-officio* membership of the churchwardens.

³ A Bill to make the rich parishes of London, with a low Poor Rate, more liable than they were for rates in aid of the East End.

who first put the eight hours term of labour into operation in the Education Office. He was promptly followed up by the War Office. The War Office employ, I think, some 18,000 or 19,000. . . . Then you are aware that in the same way the Admiralty has now followed suit. . . . I see some on this platform who are Fabians, some who hold advanced views on labour questions, and I venture to ask if they two years ago would have deemed it possible for one moment that such a step as this would have been undertaken by the responsible Government of this country. . . . There is the Home Office . . . in the multiplication of inspectors, in mines, in factories, and in quarries, in the appointment of female inspectors, in the regulation of dangerous trades, and in seeking further powers as he is now doing for the further regulation of dangerous and unhealthy trades, Mr. Asquith, I believe, has beaten the record. Let me say one word about the Board of Trade where my friend Mr. Mundella has once more been showing his zeal and his interest in labour questions. . . .

The Prime Minister's efforts may well have done something to stop the dangerous growth of Radical discontent. But a good deal more may have been done by the reports that a real Radical Budget was to be expected from Harcourt. If Imperialist pressure requiring the concession to the Admiralty of a great new building programme was, in the balance of political forces, as inescapable as the Uganda Protectorate reluctantly announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on April 12th, Harcourt, it was reported, was the man to lay the cost in the right place—on the rich and on drink. And though such controversial matter as the Naval Estimates, the Equalisation of Rates (London) Bill and the Tower Bridge (Southern Approach) Bill¹ had been discussed before the Budget was opened, and other and even more controversial matter like the Evicted Tenants (Ireland) Bill, the Welsh Disestablishment Bill and the Registration Bill was to be discussed afterwards, Harcourt's Budget announcement of April 16th was destined to prove the principal event of the Session. It was not merely that Harcourt boldly defied the "Drink Interest" in proposing to raise part of the money for the new Naval Programme by adding 6*d.* per gallon to the spirit duties and 6*d.* per barrel to those on beer. In the sphere of the Death Duties he made some much more startling Radical

¹ Cf. A. G. Gardiner, *John Benn and the Progressive Movement*, p. 169, for the important concession on "the principle of betterment" that was held by the "Radical Socialists" of London to have been made by the Government in this Bill. "The principle of betterment", much fought over in this Parliament, allowed a local authority whose works of demolition or construction improved the value of adjacent property to collect a "betterment rate", distasteful to property owners.

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innovations. To begin with, he deprived "real property", passing at death, of an important fiscal privilege it had so far managed to retain when he determined that, like Personal Property, it should pay Estate Duty on "the principal value" and not on the "value of the succession", which, in the case of entailed estates, had always been allowed to count for less and sometimes for much less. Estate Duty, moreover, which had hitherto been collected at a mere 1 per cent even on the largest fortunes, was now graduated on a scale running from 1 to 8 per cent so that estates valued, for example, at between £10,000 and £25,000 were to pay 4 per cent in Estate Duty and estates of over a million 8 per cent.¹

It had, in fact, needed some effort from the Prime Minister to prevent Harcourt from graduating the Estate Duty up to the then dizzy height of 10 per cent—a figure that would assuredly have produced even more desperate opposition from the Conservatives than the 8 per cent finally put in the Bill. Alleging the unemployment certain to result when heirs began dismissing gardeners and maids because of the difficulties of paying Estate Duty on the new "confiscatory" scale,² drawing pathetic pictures of the hardships of heirs who succeeded to properties, almost forfeit to the Exchequer after a number of holders' deaths in rapid succession,³ Conservatives made a desperate enough fight as it was. On May 10th the Finance Bill was only read a second time by a majority of 14; there were difficult times in Committee with a majority again sinking to 14 on July 2nd; and, finally, the Third Reading was carried on July 17th by the not very imposing vote of 283 against 263. But at this stage it was safe. The Lords had no constitutional right to amend or "mutilate" the Budget, and nothing would have suited the Government or its Radical supporters better than an attempt to reject it. A General Election would have resulted which would have returned a larger and more Radical majority than that of 1892 and one, moreover, claiming a definite "mandate" to end or mend the Lords. What made such a consummation the more certain, according to some bitter Tory commentators, was the way

¹ Cf. Crewe's *Rosebery*, ii, 466, for the Prime Minister's claim to have prevented Harcourt taking the scale up to 10 per cent, a giddy height for that day.

² Cf. George Brooks, *Industry and Property*, ii, 70, for the millionaire Duke of Devonshire's fear that his successor would not be able to maintain Chatsworth and Hardwicke Hall.

³ Cf. Crewe's *Rosebery*, ii, 467, for the Prime Minister himself being worried on this point and observing that "there had been three Dukes of Bedford in three years, to take one example". Cf. also *Hansard*, July 9th, for Sir Michael Hicks-Beach on other aspects of the confiscatory effects of the Budget.

in which Harcourt's Budget had associated onerous Death Duty taxation of the very rich with tax-immunity for the poor, and corrupting tax-remissions for the "lower middle classes". The Income-Tax sections of Harcourt's Budget had, indeed, exempted from tax, incomes of £160 or less instead of £150 or less; had excused incomes of under £400 the tax on the first £160 of income instead of the first £120; and, finally, had allowed incomes of between £400 and £500, never hitherto given special consideration, tax-exemption on the first £100.¹

If the Lords, aware of the exaggerations of their alarmists,² refrained from a Budget rejection which would have annihilated Conservatism's now attractive election chances, they and their allies in the Commons, nevertheless, made Ministers pay heavily for carrying the fiscal programme. Thus the time absorbed by the strenuous Budget fight in the Commons deprived Ministers of the chance of making much more than a First Reading demonstration with the Welsh Disestablishment Bill—and the result of deferring the Parliamentary struggle on that difficult Bill to 1895 was a troublesome mutiny on the part of a number of Welsh Radical members, prominent among whom was Mr. Lloyd George.³ Moreover, in order to find time for a Parochial Electors (Registration Acceleration) Bill to give full effect to the Parish Councils Act, and for a Local Government (Scotland) Bill to bestow on Scotland parallel local government advantages to those gained by England,⁴ much more of the Government programme had to be jettisoned than Welsh Disestablishment. Temperance "fanatics", for instance, were by no means pleased that their strenuous campaigns to prepare the country for Local Option, as the main issue of 1894, had been completely disregarded by the Ministers. Then there were "Independent Labour" taunts at the trickiness of

¹ Cf. *The Liberal Platform, 1895*, p. 256: "These concessions affect 500,000 taxpayers, who will, under this scheme, pay rather less at 8d. than they paid in 1893-4 with the Income Tax at 7d.

² Cf. Brooks, *Industry and Property*, ii, 512-14, for the wildness of the schemes pushed upon Conservatives by some who considered that an Estate Duty of 8 per cent might quickly approach 100 per cent if not resisted.

³ Cf. the Prime Minister at the Town Hall, Birmingham, May 23rd: "Some young and daring natives of the Principality of Wales have taken it into their heads that it would be a wise thing to put the Government into a minority . . . if they do not believe in our honour and our honesty, the sooner they carry their threats into effect the better I shall be pleased." "The revolt" drove him nevertheless to a pledge that Welsh Disestablishment would be carried through the Commons before the Government dissolved Parliament.

⁴ Both Bills took considerable time for the Conservatives demanded concessions and safeguards against overloading of the rates.

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Mr. Asquith's tactics in introducing a new Factories and Workshops Bill on April 30th which, it was alleged, he had not the slightest hope of passing. And Radical members, with narrow majorities, must have seen good cause for anxiety in the fate of "electoral reform" during the 1894 Session. The Registration Bill, enshrining this "electoral reform", had already been lightened of part of the 'Newcastle pledges'¹ in order to facilitate the enactment of the rest, especially "one man, one vote" and the reduction of the residence qualification from eighteen months to three. But the first serious Tory challenge of May 4th brought a Division of 298 votes against 292 and the end of the Bill's Sessional prospects even in the Commons. The Tories were apparently confident that that favourite protégé of theirs, "the over-burdened ratepayer" could be rallied strongly against "loading the rates" with the salaries of the Superintendent and District Registrars of Voters required by Ministers' alleged new scheme of trying to poll even the "vagabond class".²

More harassing for Ministers, perhaps, than any other legislative failure in 1894 was the defeat of the Evicted Tenants Bill. Ministers had persuaded the bulk of the Irish members, if not the small band of Parnellites, to admit that, for the time, it would be most inexpedient to spend the greater part of another Parliamentary Session on a Home Rule Bill for the Lords to trample upon. The Irishmen had agreed, for the 1894 Session, to content themselves with a Bill to help the many hundreds of Evicted Tenants,³ whose plight represented the victory of Balfourian Coercion over the rent-reducing "Plan of Campaign" in a dangerously provocative

¹ Cf. *Lord Rosebery's Speeches, 1874-1896*, pp. 220-1: "I quite admit about the Registration Bill, that it has many omissions of provisions that I should like to see inside it. It has, for instance, no provision for seeing that the payment of expenses should not fall on bona-fide candidates, and I confess I regret extremely that owing to the necessity under present Parliamentary conditions of not overloading that Bill too much and of giving too much subject of controversy in it, we were compelled to throw that provision overboard. . . ." Thus after decades of agitation it was still being proposed to leave polling costs upon the candidates in order to placate the "overburdened ratepayer".

² The amount of migration and "going on tramp" among unskilled and general labourers was still surprisingly high, especially in bad times. But though Salisbury incautiously allowed himself to condemn the enfranchisement of persons "who are mere vagabonds, here to-day and gone to-morrow" and though other Tories went farther in condemning alleged proposals "to flood the electoral lists with the offscourings of the casual wards" (cf. *The Liberal Platform, 1895*, p. 386), there was no obvious rally of a sympathetic "public" to the maligned classes and their would-be enfranchisers.

³ Morley's *Recollections*, i, 330, for "some thousands of evicted tenants whose misery was both a provocation to disorder and opened an excellent chance for political mischief-makers".

form. The problem of the Evicted Tenants had been agitating Ireland and Irish America for years¹ and the Government claimed that the wisest way to treat the difficulty was to hold that the Evicted Tenants had already paid a heavy penalty for their attempts to dictate rent-reductions. Now it would be best to accept their oft-repeated pledges to abide, in future, by tenancy agreements until legally altered, and to expedite their resettlement on the estates from which they had been evicted. On certain conditions, recommended by a Royal Commission which the Tories hotly charged with partisanship,² Ministers proposed to use compulsion, if necessary, to force back the Evicted Tenants upon their landlords. And if landlords' claims to arrears of rent due from these tenants were safeguarded, it was, according to indignant Tories, only because "at least £100,000 of National money" was to be "squandered" on "lawbreakers, conspirators" and their dupes.³

As might be expected, the whole principle of the Evicted Tenants Bill was hotly challenged by the Tories. It had taken, according to them, six years of resolute but benevolent government on their part to bring Ireland back to a respect for "law and order", and much of their work had already been undone since Mr. Morley had returned to the Irish Office and resumed his boasted "contacts" with Irish opinion.⁴ To alter the whole assumptions of property law in order to force a pack of conspirators and rent-refusers back upon unwilling landlords,⁵ who had nearly always shown great patience before resorting to eviction, would merely be to complete Mr. Morley's work and encourage Irish lawlessness to resume its old domination. How, moreover, could landlords ever feel safe if forced to re-admit to their estates numbers of men who had been lionised and kept for years as "national heroes", who had tasted of the sweets of political agitation and who would certainly be ready to make trouble at the first new opportunity?

¹ Large relief funds had been raised in America—and Irish-American influence was being used in a very anti-British direction in American politics.

² Cf. *Hansard*, March 13, March 29, and May 1, 1893.

³ Cf. *North American Review*, June 1894, for the junior Tory ex-Minister, Sir E. Ashmead-Bartlett, writing on the English political position.

⁴ Cf. *Hansard*, June 20th, for the debate on a motion to reduce Mr. Morley's salary.

⁵ Cf. Morley's *Recollections*, ii, 38, for a great Irish landlord, the Marquis of Waterford, telling Morley frankly in November 1894, when he was meditating doing something for the evicted tenants in a projected Land Bill: "As for evicted tenants, I might be perfectly certain that the Lords would never stand compulsion in any form, nor would H.'s amendment suffice for them. Why should I go for compulsion? I had tried that plan; Parliament would not have it. Why not go for the practicable. . . ?"

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Pushed to the front when the long Budget struggle was over, the Evicted Tenants Bill, was, on July 23rd, read a second time after a Division of 259-227. Then began a determined struggle in Committee which could only be brought to an end on August 2nd by the use of the Closure. After further challenges on the Report and Third Reading stages had been disposed of by August 7th, the Bill was ready for the Lords where another humiliating rebuff, on a large scale, was being prepared for Ministers by the Tory majority. And if the huge figures of the Home Rule rejection of September 1893 were not again reached, the Rosebery Government was hardly strong enough to face with equanimity even the lesser figures of the Evicted Tenants Bill defeat of August 14th. In a pre-Prorogation speech of August 20th, Harcourt might talk bravely of putting Reform of the Lords on the next Sessional programme but he could not undo the effect of such a contemptuous defiance as was undertaken by the Peers when they rejected the Government's main Irish measure by 249 votes against 30. The non-political "general public", always merciless to apparent political futility, was already tending, under the influence of an enormous newspaper clamour, to dismiss the Commons majority as composed of little but "faddists", "fanatics" and Irish.¹

In English politics it is, of course, fatal for a party to allow the constant reiteration of its political opponents to establish "faddism" or "fanaticism" as its type with a "general public" nearly always unable or unwilling to pry below the surface. But a very large part of the majority of 1894 had been assiduously charged with Teetotal "fanaticism" by the now thoroughly organised Liquor Trade, and the political results promised to be dangerous in a still very beer-sodden England.² Moreover, prominent parts of the majority were identified also with such alleged "fads" as

¹ Cf. Sir E. Ashmead-Bartlett, M.P., in the *North American Review*, June 1894, on the "heterogeneous mass of faddists, crotcheteers, fanatics, Home Rulers, and revolutionaries that compose the Radical party".

² Cf. *Lord Rosebery's Speeches, 1874-1896*, p. 231, for the Prime Minister in the Birmingham Town Hall, May 23rd: "And though I say I am not a fanatic on this question, I view the uncontrolled condition of our liquor traffic as a serious danger for two reasons. In the first place, no one can deny that there is a great deal too much drinking, and that much of the crime and much of the pauperism, and almost all the degradation, prevalent in this country is attributable to drink. But the second point on which I regard it as a danger is this, that it is becoming too great a power in the State. I go so far as to say this, that if the State does not soon control the liquor traffic, the liquor traffic will soon control the State . . . that trade has exercised a very energetic influence in all elections, where it can do so in opposition to her Majesty's present Government."

"Little Englandism", International Arbitration, the "Condition of India Question", and the question of the "Opium Traffic" forced upon China.¹ The "Eight Hours Day", Scottish and Welsh Disestablishment, and the persistent Radical excitement about the Duke of Coburg's £10,000 per annum could be treated as further "fads" of the crotchety majority.² But possibly the most fatal "fad" of all from the electoral point of view was "Home Rule all round", the project of setting up local legislatures not only for Ireland but also for Scotland and Wales.³ Though attractive to important Radical sections in Scotland and Wales, the average Englishman was inclined to regard the plan of setting up four Parliaments in the British Isles, instead of one, as evidence almost of political dementia in some and of intense hatred of England in others.⁴

Yet if the non-political "public" was ultimately rallied by Conservatism and Liberal-Unionism against the Radical "fanatics, faddists and crotcheteers", the process was not without its delays, difficulties and vexations. The "fanatics" themselves, for example, had a most valuable electoral asset in the widespread conviction, even of the non-political, that the House of Lords was a feudal anachronism, used exclusively to defend "vested interests" and to bar reform. Unfortunately for the Radicals, this negative feeling against the Lords could not, despite a Leeds Conference and the working-class street-processions and demonstrations which Parliamentary Radicals helped to finance,⁵ be turned into a positive

¹ *North American Review*, June 1894, for Sir E. Ashmead-Bartlett, who summed up the majority as made up of "Irish Nationalists, of Disestablishmentarians, both Welsh and Scotch, of Registration Reformers of many varieties, of Trade Unionists, of Socialists, and of Teetotallers, not to say anything about anti-vaccinators, anti-vivisectionists, anti-opium men, and the advocates of peace at any price."

² Cf. *Hansard*, April 20th, for a Radical challenge on Coburg, rejected by 298-67 and May 3, 1895, for another defeated by 193-72.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, March 29, 1895, for the Scottish Radical, Dalziel, finally carrying a "Home Rule all round" resolution by 128-102.

⁴ Cf. *North American Review*, June 1894: "The Separatist and Radical fads and prejudices of Irishmen, Scotchmen, and Welshmen are humoured and favoured in every possible way. . . . A whole English county, Monmouthshire, which has never been in Wales, and which is entirely English in language and preponderatingly English in blood, is to be filched from England and deprived of its church, in order to gratify Welsh disestablishers. The Scotch are to have a separate grand committee for Scotch affairs. Ireland and Wales are to have similar separate grand committees. There is to be no similar grand committee for England. English affairs and English interests are still to be dominated and controlled by Scotch, Welsh, and Irish Radicals. . . . The Irish Nationalists have twenty-three seats in Parliament more than they are entitled to. . . . The Welsh Radicals have three more seats. . . ."

⁵ Especially the Hyde Park demonstrations of Sunday, March 18th and Sunday, July 26th. See the *Daily Chronicle* of March 19th and July 27th for the proceedings.

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yearning for the whole Radical programme and for an increased Radical membership to put it upon the Statute Book.¹ It would almost seem, in fact, that Harcourt's Budget tended, while it was in the public's mind, to capture more votes from the non-political than denunciation of the House of Lords.² Certainly, the Budget had its uses in an important by-election of July in the Attercliffe Division of Sheffield and in a two-member by-election at Leicester late in August. All three Gladstonian seats were retained without special difficulty despite Tory attack from one flank and "Independent Labour" attack from the other.

There is plenty of warrant, indeed, for taking the view that the decisive turn of the non-political "public" towards Conservatism did not begin till the autumn of 1894 and was then related both to the Budget's becoming staler history and to a deterioration of the international situation, making obvious the advantage of substituting a stronger Government for the one resting on Rosebery's precarious majority.³ It was not only that acute friction with France in many corners of a yet undelimited colonial world seemed to be increasing,⁴ and that, in Madagascar particularly, the French disregard of British treaty rights threatened to produce a dangerous crisis at any moment.⁵ It was also that the Sino-Japanese war, opened on the Korean question during the summer of 1894, was

¹ Cf. *Lord Rosebery's Speeches, 1874-1896*, for an admission in the Bradford speech of October 27th attacking the Tory Peers: "I fully acknowledge the importance to be attached to the Leeds Conference. I acknowledge the sincerity and earnestness with which those proceedings were conducted. But one swallow does not make a summer, and one conference in itself does not make that overwhelming mass of public opinion which alone will enable you to deal effectively with the House of Lords."

² Cf. *Daily Chronicle*, August 2nd, for some of the speeches made at the dinner given at the Hotel Métropole to Sir William Harcourt in celebration of the passing of his Budget.

³ Cf. *Lord Rosebery's Speeches, 1874-1896*, for Rosebery (on newspaper alarms) at Sheffield, October 25th: "I am not so vain as to suppose . . . that the toast of her Majesty's Ministers is drunk in this great city without considerable reservation. . . . The other day there was a Cabinet called which seems to have been one of the most remarkable Cabinets that have ever been held, for a thousand reasons were found. . . . At first we were in a turmoil and a terror because it meant war, and then immediately it was over, we discovered that it meant something totally different. . . ."

⁴ In West Africa, Central Africa, and the Burma-Siam-Indo-China frontier regions above all.

⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*: "The subject of Madagascar lies in a nutshell. By a treaty concluded under a previous Government, Madagascar is recognised to be under the protectorate of France. As long as France does not exceed her rights under that treaty . . . England with all her interest in Madagascar, with all her missionary and traditionary interests in Madagascar, can only abide by the treaty she has signed. . . ."

now threatening the world with a breakdown of the defeated Chinese Government and a dangerous scramble among the Powers for Far Eastern annexations, protectorates and "spheres of influence". In such a scramble, Russia, established to the north of the Chinese Empire at Vladivostok, and France, established to the south in Indo-China, seemed in the strongest position to make formidable gains and jointly to wrest the initiative in the Far East from Great Britain.

On October 25, 1894, the Prime Minister, speaking at Sheffield, had already had to own to the country something of the acuteness of the colonial troubles with France¹ and virtually to admit Opposition newspaper reports of a check to Government attempts to secure peace for China. Though a collapse of Imperial authority in China meant, in the Prime Minister's own words, "such an appalling danger to any Christian situated within its limits, such an overflow of dangerous elements into every part of the world that joins it, that I, for one, consider that it might be the gravest catastrophe that could happen to Asiatic civilisation", Rosebery had practically to confess that Russia, followed to some extent by France, had declined to enter into a British-proposed Concert of Powers to mediate a Sino-Japanese peace. The Prime Minister denied, of course, that this constituted the "rebuff" stressed by the Opposition Press² and went on to assure the country that its Imperial interests were as safe in his party's hands as in those of the Conservative Opposition.³

¹ "I should not be sincere if I said there had not been periods within the last two years when I had felt some anxiety about our relations with France . . . those relations, by conciliation on both sides, may be eventually improved . . . we in this country, on our side, are at this moment negotiating in Paris for a settlement of the various questions pending. I hope that these questions may be settled, but in so vast a variety of them, in cases where we touch each other at every point, you must be patient and not expect a settlement too soon. . . ."

² ". . . we did think it our duty to sound the other Courts of Europe and of the United States. . . . The reception of these approaches was extraordinarily favourable. The Powers of Europe seemed to feel that a common calamity overshadowed them; but in the judgement of one or two of them—only one, I think, but we will say one or two to be within the confines of the truth—it did not appear that the time had yet arrived . . . to represent that when the Powers of Europe consider a question of this kind, if one of the Powers thinks the time has not yet come and the other Powers are prepared to strain a point and think that the time has come, that there is therefore a rebuff for the Power that has sounded them in the interests of peace, is to my mind one of the most preposterous positions. . . ."

³ *Lord Rosebery's Speeches, 1874-1896*, pp. 265-6: "Do not believe that the party that supports the Empire is limited to those who wear black coats, or to those who will pay the higher duties under Sir William Harcourt's scheme. The democracy are just as vitally interested as any portion of the State, if only for

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Despite the Prime Minister's brave words, new French demands on the Queen of Madagascar, accompanied by war-preparations, and a Japanese invasion of China proper, after successes in Korea, could hardly have reassured those who doubted whether a Government, as weak domestically as Rosebery's, could get adequate attention for the British viewpoint abroad. Whatever the cause, certain it is that in the Forfarshire by-election of November 17th the Conservatives at last succeeded in inflicting a grave electoral reverse on the Government. After successfully fighting off by-election attacks since March, Ministerialists lost what should apparently have been a safe seat by figures which showed a remarkable increase in Conservative strength. The omens grew worse for the Government when, in December, Conservatism captured another Liberal seat in the Brigg Division of Lincolnshire despite the clamant Radical rhetoric against the House of Lords on which Rosebery himself, defying Royal displeasure, had been induced to rest his dwindling electoral hopes.¹

It could be argued, nevertheless, that Salisbury's Government of 1886-92 had endured much longer and more continuous by-election misfortune than its successor had yet known, and that for Radicals to grow disheartened would be but to play the Conservative game. There was certainly no lack of Radical belligerency at the conference of the National Liberal Federation, held at Cardiff in January 1895. The full Newcastle faith was reaffirmed with emphasis; a great part of it was announced as standing on the Sessional programme for 1895; and the Radical heart of "gallant little Wales" was rejoiced by the assurance that Welsh Disestablishment would this time be taken through every stage in the Commons and sent to the Lords as the "people's will".² Early, moreover, in a Session, begun on February 5th, Ministers displayed enough "Socialism" to promise relief works in Donegal, the purposes of commerce. . . . As you have admitted larger and larger numbers of your fellow-countrymen to the suffrage, they each of them feel that their personal name and honour are now implicated in the name and honour of the Empire."

¹ Cf. Crewe's *Rosebery*, ii, 451-64, for exchanges between the Queen and her Prime Minister. Rosebery's Bradford speech of October 27th particularly stirred the Queen's resentment, and she entered into dubiously constitutional consultations with the Opposition on such matters as the possibility of dismissing the Rosebery Government and forcing on a General Election, advantageous to the Opposition (cf. *Letters of Queen Victoria*, Third Series, ii, 430-48).

² Cf. *Lord Rosebery's Speeches, 1874-1896*, p. 301, for his assurance at Cardiff: "We meet on the field where the first blow is to be struck, for, as you know, your great Welsh measure is the first that we put in the front of our programme."

because of a failure of the potato-crop, and a Select Committee on the Unemployed to "Labour", then agitated by a "hard winter's" distress. And despite critically narrow divisions at various stages of the proceedings on the Address, Ministers were vastly cheered by a fortunate by-election result at Colchester on February 19th. That a seat with a long Tory tradition should have been captured by the Government the day after its majorities in the Commons had sunk to 8 and 14, certainly seemed to show that Ministerial disaster at the next elections was by no means so certain as the Opposition was forecasting.¹

Unfortunately for the Government the wide legislative programme on which Ministers tried to keep Parliament busy failed to stir the non-political "public" to any genuine interest. And "faddy" Radical motions such as those on Home Rule all round, Second Ballot,² Indian Opium³ and the cancellation of the Duke of Coburg's annuity, probably completed the alienation of a "public", already half-inclined to join in the boisterous Opposition jeering at a "powerless" and "crotchet-driven" Government. The "public", of course, saw merely the apparent futility of spending months of legislative time on a programme hardly a fraction of which could be placed on the Statute Book in existing circumstances. It was hardly capable of appreciating, even if it would, the great and varied talent that had gone to that programme's construction.

Outstanding even among Government proposals that included an important Irish Land measure in Mr. Morley's charge, a Conciliation (Trades Disputes) Bill in Mr. Bryce's, a Scottish Grand Committee motion in Sir G. O. Trevelyan's, a measure against Plural Voting in Mr. Shaw-Lefevre's,⁴ and Factory, Truck

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, February 15th, for some of Chamberlain's taunts when moving an amendment to the Address asking for a dissolution.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, April 5th, for the adoption of a Second Ballot resolution by 132-72. Theoretically, there was ample justification for the claim that where a constituency had had to divide its votes between more than two candidates and no one of them had obtained a majority of the votes cast, the candidate at the head of the poll might well be unrepresentative of the majority. Actually, however, the elimination of Tories, who slipped in because of the division of the "progressive" vote between Liberal and "Labour" was the strategic end aimed at. Yet despite continental precedent, the notion of forcing the electorate to vote twice, in such cases, could never be made a popular one.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, May 24th, when Sir J. Pease's motion that the House is of the opinion that the system by which the Indian opium revenue is raised is morally indefensible was rejected by 176 to 59 votes.

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, April 30th, for a new plan of holding General Elections. All elections were to be held simultaneously throughout the country, and election day was always to be Saturday, the most convenient day for the working man.

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and Mines Bills in Mr. Asquith's was the Welsh Disestablishment Bill. If Mr. Morley's clauses on tenant improvement, rent-arrears, and evicted tenants were attacked as heavily biased against landlords;¹ if Mr. Bryce's plan of empowering local authorities to start Conciliation and Arbitration Boards aroused some suspicions; if the suggested Scottish Grand Committee was denounced as a transparent device to prevent the Scottish Conservative minority from enlisting support in Parliament against legislative tyranny in Committee by the Scottish Radical majority—all these and similar proposals hardly stirred Conservative ire to the same extent as Welsh Disestablishment. Though, by April 1st, Mr. Asquith had carried the Second Reading by the comparatively satisfactory majority of 304 against 260,² he must have known something of the anxieties that faced him in Committee. If he could hardly have anticipated that June 17th would find him with an enhanced reputation but still no farther forward in Committee than Clause 5, he must, at least, have foreseen the efforts that Conservatives would make to wreck the Disendowment proposals,³ and the

¹ Mr. Morley's Bill, for example, re-defined the Irish Land Law so that improvements were presumed to be the tenant's unless the contrary was proved; all improvements, and not merely those mentioned in the Act of 1870, became compensable; arrears of rent dating back longer than two years were to be irrecoverable, etc., etc. For Morley's troubles to get a Select Committee to make the Report on which the Bill was based see his *Recollections*, i, 350-2.

² This increase of the Government majority above normal was due to the Parnellites deciding to support the Government and to fifteen of the more Radical Liberal-Unionists deciding to abstain. Chamberlain, heavily committed, voted for the Bill.

³ Thus the whole of the tithe-rent charge from Wales and Monmouthshire, amounting to a gross commuted value of £179,914 per annum, was to be "secularised" as the sitting incumbents' interests fell in or were liquidated. "Secularisation" of this and other pre-1703 parochial endowment, to a considerable extra value, was to be carried out, parish by parish, according to schemes drawn up by the County Councils concerned and approved by the Welsh Commission. The schemes of the County Councils were to be directed, with due regard to the interested parish, to the following ends: the erection or support of cottage or other hospitals, or dispensaries, or convalescent homes; the provision of trained nurses for the sick poor; the foundation and maintenance of public parish and district halls, institutes and libraries; the provision of labourers' dwellings and allotments; technical and higher education; and any other public purpose of local or general utility for which provision is not made by Statute out of public rates.

"Secularisation", however, involved other property than that already mentioned. Thus, parochially, it involved the transfer of the churchyard and the glebe to the parish, district or town council concerned, though the church itself and the parsonage would remain with the Disestablished Church as would endowments made by private persons since 1703. Then, centrally, the Welsh ecclesiastical property in the possession of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and Queen Anne's bounty was to be "secularised" to provide the main income of a large Central Fund, charged with the working expenses of the Welsh Commission and cathedral repair, indeed, but more largely with the "promotion of technical and higher education, including the establishment and maintenance of a library, museum, or academy of art for Wales".

trouble that might come, from the other side, if Lloyd George insisted on a partisan "Welsh Council" to administer the measure instead of a non-political Commission.¹

But the Government's fate had probably been sealed long before Welsh Disestablishment had reached its June stage for, on April 8th, Harcourt had insisted, against good electioneering advice to the contrary, on adding a Local Veto Bill to an already overcrowded Sessional programme. It was, no doubt, the honourable thing to do, for Ministers were deeply pledged to the Temperance cause whose zealots, besides, were in a position to make trouble. But it would have been more politic to use the "state of public business" as an excuse for holding off from Local Veto as long as possible for it was on this subject that the "general public", not committed to Teetotalism, was most inclined to see "Radical fanaticism" at its worst. On April 24th, certainly, the Government lost a seat in Mid-Norfolk by figures that were ominous if not sensational, and on May 14th a Walworth by-election produced a second Government loss and figures worse than those of Mid-Norfolk. Then, on May 23rd, the Government not only failed badly in an attempt to hold the "Liberal" seat of ex-Speaker Peel but suffered a damaging slap in the face from a Scottish Radical member, grown impatient of the Government's alleged neglect of the pledges given to Scottish Radicalism. When, on May 23rd, Dr. MacGregor, M.P. for Inverness-shire, resigned his seat as a protest against Ministers' remissness in pressing forward a new Crofters Bill to protect shrinking Highland tenancies better against advancing deer-forests, more profitable to landlords,² he did more than give the exultant Opposition further proof of the disintegration of the Government following. He forced on a by-election which resulted in the loss of a Government seat in circumstances more humiliating than those at any of the unfortunate by-elections that had gone before.

¹ The "Welsh Council" advocated by Mr. Lloyd George would have been chosen by the County Councils and might well have been very partisan indeed. As it was, Gladstone already considered the Bill too severe and was being tempted to make a public protest against the extremer demands of the Welsh Dissenters.

² Cf. *The Liberal Platform*, 1895, pp. 721-32, for the results already claimed for the Crofters Act of 1886—rents totalling £73,145 reduced to "fair rents" of £52,152 and arrears of £180,124 brought down to £58,123. The return of the Gladstonians to power in 1892 had next brought the crofters the "Deer Forests Commission", and now they were demanding both an extension of crofters' rights in their holdings and a vast expansion of those entitled to claim the special protection, as against their landlords, of crofters' legislation.

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The story of the final defeat of the Government has often been told. On June 21st Campbell-Bannerman, Secretary for War, reported to the House the result of the long and delicate negotiations on "Army Reform" on which he had been engaged. From one point of view his announcements denoted the triumph of a long and pertinacious Radical crusade. Not only was the royal Duke of Cambridge to lay down the Commandership-in-Chief but it was made obvious that Queen Victoria had at last been brought to see that that office, and its special relations with the Crown, could not remain as they were. The next Commander-in-Chief, it was announced, would hold office subject to the rules of ordinary staff appointments and he, with the other heads of the military departments, would form an Army Council directly responsible to the Secretary for War. These preliminaries, of course, made it certain that no Commander-in-Chief from the Royal House would follow the Duke of Cambridge, and indeed, the time was long overdue for a serious professional soldier, who had risen by merit, to undertake the numerous Army changes necessary.

After listening to the "sensational" Army announcement of Campbell-Bannerman, the House of Commons passed on to the normally humdrum business of Army Supply, and on this subject the Opposition claimed that the cordite and cartridge stocks kept by the Army had been allowed to fall too low for the national safety. What was more, in a House thinned by the advent of the dinner-hour, the Opposition carried a motion to reduce the War Secretary's salary and so enforced his resignation.¹ Next day the whole Ministry adopted the resolution of resigning with Campbell-Bannerman. An attempt to reconstruct the tottering Government and weld together the broken majority appeared well-nigh hopeless. It seemed better to go into Opposition and be ready with criticisms of Salisbury's expected efforts to form a Coalition Government of Conservatives and Liberal-Unionists. Such a course could hardly make election prospects worse and might well make them better.

¹ *Hansard*, June 21st, for the carrying of Mr. Brodrick's motion to reduce the War Secretary's salary by £100. The figures were 132 votes against 125. A particularly telling figure produced by the Opposition was the stock of 700,000,000 rifle cartridges kept by Japan as against the 100,000,000 kept by Britain. Campbell-Bannerman claimed to have the guarantee of Redvers Buller, the successful adjutant-general at the War Office, that nothing was amiss and seems, indeed, to have been suspected of desiring to appoint his adviser Commander-in-Chief instead of Buller's senior, Lord Wolseley.

CHAPTER XII

THE 1895 ELECTIONS AND AFTER

"Ten years before he came before them as a convinced Radical. Ten years of the House of Commons, fighting the stubborn obstruction of privilege, had made him ten times more Radical than ever. Liberals had tried to carry out every pledge. Conservatives had obstructed every generous proposal, reversed every cherished hope, sown dissension in the forces which worked for the aspirations of the future. What had been going on at Derby, Bradford, and elsewhere was the Devil's work. The country would not surrender to the Tory party. The people would resent this plot to destroy the future of democracy by putting them under the heels of peers and brewers, under the dictation of the priesthood. If they thought he had lived up to their and his own ideal, he hoped they would add one more vote and voice to the cause of Progress in the House of Commons. . . .

"The Tories had made endowment of denominational schools out of the rates a vital issue. Wellingborough would never surrender to the demand that two millions were to be handed to denominational managers, without popular control.

"His opponent, vague on most topics, was in earnest on one. He was a Protectionist and believed in a 5s. duty on corn. Where would profit in the shoe trade go, if they had one duty on imported hides, and another on machinery imported from America? It might be a good thing if all the hides used in England could be produced in England, but if they had all the English hides and all the American hides too, they would make more boots and more profits. It would be the same with machinery. Protection would raise the cost of production, and increase the chances of their competitors. They would export fewer boots, and pay more for food. . . .

"If Tories said Local Option was an infringement of working men's liberties, they forgot that Mr. Ritchie's County Government Bill gave the people power to elect representatives upon Licensing Boards, with the same rights as magistrates now. . . .

"Most places have gone wrong, but East Northants has proved its constancy and courage. You were told Liberals promised everything and did nothing, that Liberals had destroyed the trade of the country. You knew better, and we have won. In standing by me when the whole country was going wrong, you have done me the highest honour of my life. . . ."

F. A. Channing saves a Radical seat, July 1895.

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"I am impressed with the extreme importance of securing as large a share as possible of the mutual trade of the United Kingdom and the Colonies for British producers and manufacturers, whether located in the Colonies or in the United Kingdom."

Opening of an important Colonial Office Circular from Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, November 1895.

WHEN Lord Salisbury had succeeded in forming a Coalition Cabinet containing so notable a batch of ex-Liberals as Chamberlain, Goschen, Sir Henry James, the Duke of Devonshire and Lord Lansdowne, the electoral doom of the weaker or less-securely placed "Gladstonian" members of the majority of 1892-5 seemed certain. Indeed, when the Dissolution of July 9th unleashed against the late majority the full force of a strong platform and a singularly powerful Press, the conviction grew that "Gladstonian" prospects were even worse than had been forecast. Apart from a record of Parliamentary "failure" that lent itself to jeering belittlement of a peculiarly dangerous kind, apart from exposure to perilous charges of having neglected British defences at a dangerous time, they had one tremendous handicap in the unending quarrels of the Irish Nationalist politicians with whom they were allied,¹ and another in the large number of "Independent Labour" candidates who appeared to split the "progressive" vote. Prospects doubtless seemed black when 124 seats were resigned to Lord Salisbury's Government without a contest as against a mere 10 seats similarly left to the Liberals. Candidates must have been difficult to find, and money could hardly have been plentiful in the Central Party Funds. Had not Gladstone continually lamented the departure of men of position and wealth from his following, and did not the hostility of such ex-Liberal organs as *The Scotsman* and *The Birmingham Daily Post* mark the departure of much mercantile, professional and industrial talent and power?

When the polling came, a veritable Parliamentary upheaval was produced by the three per cent or so of the British electorate always tempted to change sides when the political current is running strongly against the party they once favoured. 411 supporters of Lord Salisbury were returned—340 Conservatives and 71 Liberal-Unionists—as against an Opposition of 259, 82 of them Irish Nationalists and only 177 from England, Wales and Scotland combined. The most surprising defeats had occurred—Harcourt and Morley had lost their seats, for example, and if a seat was at once found for Harcourt, and Morley returned to the Commons after an interval, Shaw-Lefevre and Arnold Morley, the other two

¹ In addition to the bitter feud between Parnellites and Anti-Parnellites, there was often trouble inside the larger Anti-Parnellite group.

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rejected members of the Cabinet of 1892-5, never again found their way back to the House of Commons. Samuel Storey was another of the defeated though he had been member for Sunderland since 1881 and had played a very prominent part among the Gladstonian majority in the last Parliament. Four typical "Gladstonians", condemned by the election of 1895 to permanent disappearance from Parliament, were G. W. E. Russell, an aristocratic minor Minister of advanced views,¹ C. A. V. Conybeare, who had suffered imprisonment under "Bloody Balfour" for encouraging resistance to "Irish Coercion", George Howell, who had for nearly ten years been the model "Gladstonian Labour" M.P. for N.E. Bethnal Green, and J. S. Keay, an Anglo-Indian with pronounced views on the injustices of British finance in India. W. P. Byles, a Bradford newspaper owner, and Alpheus Cleophas Morton, a City architect with a name irresistible to *Punch*, were two members of the Gladstonian majority of 1892 condemned to wait until 1906 before reappearing in Parliament. W. S. Caine, Temperance leader, Baptist deacon and wealthy wholesale metal merchant, was one Gladstonian who could not re-enter Parliament before 1900, and another was W. R. Cremer, "Gladstonian Labour" M.P. for Haggerston since 1885, Secretary of the International Arbitration League, founder of Inter-Parliamentary Conferences,² and a leading opponent of the naval increases of 1894. "Sam" Woods, Baptist, total abstainer, President of the Lancashire Miners' Federation and Secretary of the Trades Union Congress was one of the defeated majority able to fight his way back to Parliament at a by-election of 1897. John Benn, however, "Progressive" leader in the London County Council and founder-owner of a valuable trade-journal, the *Cabinet Maker*, failed to return until 1904.

If it would be folly to deny that all this dispersal of the country's "progressive forces" in 1895 marked a certain revolt of "practical men" against the "humbug" and "cant" they often suspected to lie behind "progressive principles", it is also true that the "party

¹ Grandson of a Duke of Bedford, he had been M.P. for Aylesbury, 1880-5, and M.P. for North Beds, 1892-5. Under-Secretary for India in 1892, he was promoted to the Under-Secretaryship at the Home Office in 1894. He favoured Disestablishment of the Church of England and the "Radical Socialism" of the London County Council "Progressives".

² Cf. *Men and Women of the Time*, ed. 1899, art. Cremer, for the extent to which this apparently hopeful movement for bringing together representative delegations from the Parliaments of Europe was soon to reach. By 1899 there had already been conferences at Paris, London, Rome, Berne, The Hague, Budapest and Brussels, and every European Parliament except the Spanish had adherent groups.

of progress" registered polling figures not very much lower than those of its opponents. If, indeed, there had been proportional representation the Salisbury Government's majority would not have been 152 or even 52. A glance at the polling figures of Bradford's three divisions would give ample proof of this and much else. As a town, Bradford could not have contributed more than it did to the Salisbury triumph for whereas it had returned three quite "advanced" Gladstonians to the Parliament of 1892, in 1895 it presented all three seats to the Salisbury Government. Yet the votes cast in the three divisions produce the following totals: for Salisbury candidates (two Conservatives and one Liberal-Unionist) 13,803; for Liberal candidates 12,593; for one "Independent Labour" candidate 2,254.

The Bradford East division is, perhaps, worth a moment's special attention. In 1892 the redoubtable Gladstonian, W. S. Caine, had displaced the sitting Conservative by winning 5,575 votes against 5,373 but in 1895 the ex-Conservative member, H. B. Reed, a strong supporter of "religious education" and a paid lecturer of the Church Defence Institution, won back his seat with 5,843 votes against Caine's 5,139. Caine's biographer thus explains his defeat in 1895:¹

There were two factors which made against his re-election, with which he had not to contend in 1892. "The Trade", of course, did its uttermost against him on both occasions, but on the latter descended to lower depths than at any other period of his career. Sandwich-men were hired to parade the streets at 1s. 6d. per day, carrying boards with placards denouncing Caine and the Veto Bill, but also wearing muzzles to suggest that he would muzzle men's liberty; to the disgust of all decent people. When a deputation of "The Trade" waited upon him to ascertain his views, his reply was: "Gentlemen, my object in entering Parliament is to destroy your trade." Exit deputation without another word.

The two new factors were, first, the resolution of the Independent Labour Party to abstain from voting; and the pressure put upon the Irish Catholic electors by their bishop and priests to vote for the Tory who had promised help for Roman Catholic schools. . . . His first impression was that the Irish vote had not deserted him, but subsequent inquiries made it quite clear that such was the case.

It is an enlightening account.

The effect in 1895 of the "Independent Labour" propaganda that had been going on for years is singularly difficult to assess with

¹ John Newton, *W. S. Caine, M.P.*, p. 270.

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accuracy. The "Socialist message" was certainly taken farther afield than ever before, and many large industrial areas were given, for the first time, the chance of acquainting themselves directly with candidates denouncing the "Tory landlord and the Gladstonian capitalist" as equal enemies of the working class. Viewed in proper perspective it was a large step towards a new order in politics that, apart from divisions already acquainted with I.L.P. or S.D.F. Parliamentary candidatures, Aberdeen (North), Ashton-under-Lyne, Barrow-in-Furness, Bolton, Burnley, Camberwell (North), Cheshire (Hyde), Dewsbury, Fulham, Glasgow (Bridgeton), Glasgow (Blackfriars), Glasgow (St. Rollox), Huddersfield, Hull (West), Lanarkshire (Govan), Lancashire (Gorton), Leeds (South), Manchester (North-East), Middlesex (Tottenham), Newcastle, Northampton, Preston, Southampton, Swansea District and Yorkshire (Colne Valley) were now polled for Socialism for the first time, and in total disregard of the alleged dangers of "splitting the progressive vote" and "letting in the Tory". Though no single "Independent Labour" man was returned either in these divisions or in those others that had had previous experience of such candidatures—Bradford (West), for example, Bristol (East), Dundee, Glasgow (Camlachie), Halifax, Leicester, Salford (South), Walworth and West Ham (South)¹—a very considerable electoral effect was produced. Despite the geographical extent of the effort attempted, the great lack of "fighting funds" and the often complete absence of preparatory organisation, there were virtually no disgraceful polling fiascos, and sometimes the number of votes won in a division, never before attempted, was surprisingly high.² The wind, in fact, was completely taken out of the sails of the Labour Electoral Association which since its foundation in 1886 had been content, in the I.L.P. view, to work under the "grand old Gladstonian umbrella" in return for a few seats and a discreet amount of Liberal money allowed to "tame" Labour men, pledged never to take Labour questions to lengths inconvenient to their "capitalist" paymasters. Abandoned by most vigorous "Labour" and Socialist propagandists in the constituencies, the Labour Electoral Association collapsed in 1896.³

¹ All the candidatures given seem to have been I.L.P. except that at Aberdeen (North), where the candidate was unattached to the Independent Labour Party, and those at Burnley, Northampton, Salford (South) and Walworth where the candidates were Socialists working with the Social Democratic Federation.

² Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1896, for the polling figures.

³ A. W. Humphrey, *A History of Labour Representation*, p. 104.

Yet if, in perspective, the 1895 pollings and the first General Election activities of the I.L.P. are seen to have been important landmarks in "Labour's" history, it is essential to remember that the viewpoint of contemporaries was different. It is idle to deny that many acute political students on the "progressive" side considered that the I.L.P. had played a purely wrecking part in politics, both before and during the election, a part the more deplorable because without it numbers of "advanced causes" might have been nearer triumph than they were. It was not merely that some Radical seats, like Morley's at Newcastle, could be pointed to as directly "lost to the Tory" in consequence of I.L.P. candidatures "splitting the Progressive vote" but that in many other cases virulent I.L.P. criticism, totally unrelated to the possibilities of "practical politics", had done Radical and "Gladstonian Labour" candidates more harm than publican and parson combined.¹ It is not surprising to find the I.L.P. sometimes treated as a band of reckless careerists trying to exploit a spurious political patent and prepared to use "Tory Gold" in the process if only it brought eminence quickly. Even at the Trades Union Congress of 1897, the President Mr. J. Jenkins, could still challenge the I.L.P. to produce a balance-sheet and show the source of its income.²

It is essential to remember, moreover, that despite the geographical extent of the I.L.P. effort at the General Election of 1895 and the satisfactory polling figures sometimes obtained, the result was none the less a bitter, and many thought, a fatal blow to the "movement". There certainly seemed an arguable case for holding that working men had already begun to see through "the I.L.P. tricks" when Keir Hardie was resoundingly ejected from the West Ham seat to which he had been elected in 1892, when the equally prominent Ben Tillett had far fewer Bradford votes cast for him in 1895 than he had had in 1892, and when George Lansbury, belonging to an organisation, the S.D.F., even more reckless of "practical politics" than the I.L.P., obtained from an electorate of 7,430 a mere poll of 203 at a second candidature, more disheartening than the first. There were, in fact, other instances that could be quoted in support of the view that the more chance a constituency

¹ Howell, Cremer and Rowlands in London and "Sam" Woods in Lancashire were "Gladstonian Labour" members ejected from their seats. They all had cause to complain of the harm done them by I.L.P. and S.D.F. criticism and fault-finding.

² A. W. Humphrey, *A History of Labour Representation*, p. 139

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had of making itself acquainted, at close quarters, with the I.L.P. or S.D.F., the more complete would be its electoral revulsion.¹

Here, for example, is an account of John Burns (who had saved his seat at Battersea and turned "practical politician") denouncing the unpractical extremism of the S.D.F. and I.L.P. for having brought discredit and ruin upon all "progressive" causes:²

In Battersea Park, Mr. John Burns made a great onslaught. He said: "Fortunately, the Labour movement has ceased to regard the S.D.F. as the mouthpiece of rational, sensible Social Democracy. Every movement must have its dust-bin—the S.D.F. fulfils that position efficiently. Without the courage of anarchists,³ or the patience of

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1896, for the East Bristol result. At the General Election the I.L.P. vote was 1,874 out of a total electorate of 11,254 and a total of votes cast of 6,003. Yet a by-election some months before had given the I.L.P. a vote of 3,609, though this, in the absence of a Tory candidate, may have been due to a Tory manœuvre.

² A. W. Humphrey, *A History of Labour Representation*, p. 137, quoting from the *South Western World*, August 10, 1895. Burns like Hardie had demonstrated his independence of the Gladstone Government of 1892 by sitting on the Opposition side of the House. But thereafter he had found it increasingly possible to work first with the Gladstone Ministry and then with that of Rosebery. With Rosebery, indeed, he was on terms of personal friendship, having long co-operated with him in the practical administrative work of the L.C.C.

³ Anarchism had some following in the England of 1885-95, and in January 1893 (*Annual Register*, 1893, *Chronicle*, p. 2) three men were arrested at Walsall on the charge of being concerned in an anarchist plot and manufacturing explosive bombs. Five arrests followed subsequently in various places, and in April there were three sentences of ten years' imprisonment, one of five years', and two acquittals. Despite this stern suppression Anarchists attempted to take advantage of the great Coal Strike of 1893 to spread their doctrines, and a glance at the Anarchist leaflet-matter printed below (quoted Arnold White, *English Democracy, Its Promises and Perils*, pp. 80-4) would show how "moderate" men might be turned by it away from all "advanced" doctrine and towards Conservatism:

"Fellow-Workers,—In the midst of the terrible struggle in which you are engaged we, the Anarchists, ask you to consider for a moment why you are fighting, and for what purpose.

"Is it simply to retain the bare and meagre livelihood on which you have hitherto existed? Then even your success would be a failure, for the struggle would only cease to again break out with renewed bitterness before many months had elapsed.

"To-day you are the slaves of those who neither toil nor spin; you work for others who do nothing for you but to rob you of the greater part of your earnings. . . .

"You die before your time; your wives are worn out by care and anxiety; your children are killed by preventable diseases; your daughters are forced to work in sweaters' dens, and sometimes to eke out a scanty living on the streets, while the master grows fat on your misery; and if you dare rebel he turns you out till your starving bellies and your children crying for bread compel you once more to cringe at his feet.

"These monsters do not care for your welfare. Then why care for them? Strike, not for matter of wages, but to put an end to this system of legalised

politicians, they have, once more, by their part in this election, proved to be incapable of responsible action. After fourteen years' work, in a city of 500,000 voters, they can only poll 203 votes. They are factious, fanatical, intolerant, suspicious and ignorantly impracticable. Like the Bourbons, they neither learn nor forget." Speaking of Mr. Hardie, Mr. Burns said: "Parliamentary anarchism always meets its fate and unscrupulous demagoguery, whether in a Tory or a Labour Leader, is soon found out." He charged Mr. Hardie with having promised to get the Government to build two cruisers and an ironclad at West Ham to provide work for the unemployed, which, he said, "outbid everything in the way of political seduction and bribery to get votes". Mr. Hardie's unemployment agitation, Mr. Burns declared, was the most "senseless, sentimental, anti-Socialist and futile movement" Labour had ever witnessed, and it would have "reduced the problem of the unemployed to a chaos of charity, doles, and disaster, to the permanent injury of the interests of Labour". Mr. Burns said he was sorry there was no prospect of the formation of a Socialist party in England. It was the Socialists who prevented it. "So anxious are they to reach the millennium that they sacrifice each other on the road."

The other nine Englishmen and the two Irishmen who had just been elected as "Labour" members would heartily have agreed. And the hundreds of thousands of working men, who were finding Socialism most attractive as pictured in the penny editions of Blatchford's remarkable *Merrie England*,¹ would, if polled, have robbery and murder once and for ever, and if they attempt to crush you by force, show that you are men and have the courage of men.

"Do not listen to those humbugs who tell you to be moderate and law-abiding. You have been moderate and law-abiding in the past, and you are starving. The Law, the Government, is your enemy. It is simply the weapon of the capitalist robber to crush you. It exists to protect his property, i.e. the booty he has plundered from you. . . .

"It matters not which party is in power; all are alike, thieves in the pay of thieves. Politicians of all shades, Conservative, Liberal, or so-called Labour, are simply humbugs who would draw you from the more effective method—your own action. They talk on trivialities and side issues while you are starving. . . .

"No! If you would be free you must take the matter in your own hands. You must put an end to the system that enslaves you. You must sweep away masters altogether, and take back all the wealth you have made. . . .

"Miners, be determined! Insist on your rights. If you only dare to set the example, the workers of the world will follow. . . ."

¹ Cf. George Brooks, *God's England or the Devil's?—A Reply to "Merrie England"*, Introduction, for a confession of anti-Socialist alarm in June 1895: "I received from a correspondent in Liverpool, who is zealously opposing Socialism, the information that *Merrie England* was being eagerly bought and read by the working classes in that city who were described as 'going mad over it'. From time to time I received similar information from other great centres of industry, which was supplemented in some cases by the statement that classes were being formed in connection with chapels and institutes to encourage the study of *Merrie England* and to promote its principles. It thus became clear to me that this book—though full of lying and envy and all uncharitableness and though bearing traces in almost every sentence of imbecility . . . was being

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decided by majority against Keir Hardie and for continued co-operation with the Liberal party as the most "practical" immediate course.

It would seem that, in some parts of the country, Local Veto, squabbling Irish politicians and "Independent Labour" revolt did not exhaust the list of causes making for the defeat of Gladstonian politicians. The cry of "Bad Trade" was, according to Sir William Harcourt, as fatal to his party as any other,¹ and certainly the whole period of Liberal rule between 1892 and 1895 had been one of comparative depression and failure to rise from the market collapse brought about by the "Baring crisis" of 1890. Here, for example, is Samuel Smith, M.P. for Flintshire by a greatly reduced majority, explaining the matter:²

But the great depression of trade had also much to do with the change. A strong movement sprang up in favour of what was called Fair Trade, or Reciprocity. I found in contesting my constituency a very strong feeling, especially among the farmers, in favour of a return to some form of protection. The distress was very great in all our industrial centres, and especially among the agricultural population. I never found so little enthusiasm among the Welsh people. Poverty and suffering had chilled their ardour, and they were open to the blandishments of flatterers who promised in a vague way some kind of protection for suffering industries.

Conservative "flatterers" who promised "in a vague way some kind of protection for suffering industries" were apt to bring the Empire very prominently into their suggestions for trade improvement. The self-governing colonies, the Crown colonies and India, it was claimed, all took much larger quantities of British goods than foreign lands comparable with them,³ and one way of improving widely disseminated." A. M. Thompson's *Here I Lie* reports that after a shilling edition of *Merrie England* had sold 20,000 copies and 100,000 copies of a penny edition had been ordered "before the first hundred thousand were printed, we had orders for twice as many. In less than a year we had issued three-quarters of a million, and eventually sold over a million in Britain. Pirated editions to a still greater number were issued in America. Translations were published in Welsh, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian. . . ."

¹ Cf. P. Corder, *Robert Spence Watson*, p. 269, for Harcourt's letter of July 23rd, to Watson, President of the National Liberal Federation: "I expected a deluge but I had not calculated on an earthquake. I believe myself this cry of 'bad trade' has been the most potent of all the causes of our defeat. . . ."

² S. Smith, *My Life-Work*, p. 335. Mr. Smith made one interesting admission, a retreat from Home Rule: "The real cause of the disaster was increasing distrust of Mr. Gladstone's Irish policy. So much was this felt that many of us dropped Home Rule out of our programme, and fought the election on other grounds."

³ Cf. Professor Cyril Ransome, *Our Colonies and India: How we got them and why we keep them* (4th ed., 1895), for a "popular" treatment that omitted

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British trade was to maintain and even increase the Empire despite the objections of Radical "Little Englanders". In some unofficial Conservative quarters, indeed, there were determined propagandists for an Imperial Zollverein levying suitable tariffs against foreign countries not giving Britons reciprocity, and this would have suited not merely the "distressed" agricultural interest, oppressed by cheap American wheat and meat, but many manufacturers who were beginning to encounter serious German, French, Belgian and American competition for home and colonial markets. Even though the Conservative party did not officially go beyond "maintenance of the Empire"¹ as a principal platform plank alongside "social legislation",² it could still triumphantly all mention of the fact that these boasted "exports" were very often only made possible by putting money for payment into Colonial hands in the shape of loans floated on the London money-market. No hint of this is given in such passages as the following:

- "1. The Colonies and India, in the aggregate, take more than one-third of the goods we manufacture for exportation.
2. Man for man they consume an amount out of all proportion to foreigners.
3. Their importance relatively to the rest of the world is increasing at a very great rate.
4. If Protection is to be the rule in the large states, the advantage to us and to the Colonies of trade within the British Empire is likely to be still further enhanced. . . ."

Or in such another as this:

"We now come to look at the second advantage of Colonies—namely, the provision of an outlet for surplus population. . . . Now, if we only looked on the surface of the matter, we might readily think that it is of no consequence to us where an emigrant goes, so long as he goes away. (1) By leaving us, he leaves vacant a place in the labour market. Into this someone steps who was out of work, and we are thus relieved of the danger of the latter becoming a pauper—but observe, in the light of the figures I quoted above of what vital interest it is to us at home where he goes. Take X, Y, Z, colonists sailing from England. X is bound for the United States; he will send orders to England for goods worth 10s. a year. Y is going to Canada; he will order to the value of £2. While Z, whose destination is Australia, will send for £8 worth of English manufactures yearly. This is quite enough [*sic*] to show how important it is that our emigrants should not go to the United States, but to our own Colonies. . . ."

All this, inside bright red covers, passed for plain horse-sense.

¹ Cf. *Lord Rosebery's Speeches, 1874-1896*, p. 335: "I am told, vaguely indeed, that the policy of the new Government is to be the maintenance of the Empire and social legislation. In that case why did they turn us out? We maintained the Empire; we increased the Empire."

² Cf. S. H. Jeyes, *Mr. Chamberlain*, p. 383, for this platform in its domestic part: "The chief articles in his Programme were unchanged: Better Housing for the Working Classes, a comprehensive scheme of Compensation for Injuries, and some form of Provision for Old Age. These were practically the same inducements as were held out by Conservative candidates, though on the last head many of them were reticent or significantly silent. But Liberal Unionists and Conservatives alike dwelt chiefly on the shortcomings of the Liberal Government. This, indeed, was their strongest card. Although the total turnover of votes in Great Britain was estimated at less than a quarter of a million, the successes of the Unionists were so luckily distributed that they obtained a majority of 152 in the new House of Commons."

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charge Gladstonians with the folly of preparing the Empire's "disintegration" through Irish Home Rule, "Home Rule all round" and other such "crotchets" of the "Radical fanatics".

When Salisbury's victorious Ministers, before a prorogation destined to last till February 11, 1896, took Parliament through the short session of August 12 to September 5, 1895, the Government's authority seemed, for the time, almost unchallengeable. In that House of Commons age, the "country" could not be persuaded to look away from Ministers' commanding majority in the Commons to the relatively tiny proportion of the electorate that, under the British political system, had sufficed to produce it. A long and comparatively stable period of Conservative rule was expected,¹ and even Liberals admitted that the transition from a Government resting on a precarious majority and regarded with bitter hostility by all the "interests", to one with an invincible majority and favoured by these interests, might well be attended by some initial trade improvement.

In point of fact markets, already on the turn towards "prosperity", were stimulated to noticeably greater "activity" by the Stock Exchange's obvious pleasure at the prospect of a long period of "safe" Conservative rule. "A turn for the better," we are told, "came to Lombard Street in July . . .", and railway traffics, the import and export figures, the revenue statistics and the London Bankers' Clearing House Returns all began a smart ascent.²

In the worst manner of the Stock Exchange, an unprincipled "boom" was staged, and the speculative tribe succeeded in lifting prices, during a few weeks of gambling, to dizzy heights not maintainable for long. But if Consols were "lifted" to 115 and Guinness' Stock to 700, the most dangerous gambling of the "boom" went on in "Kaffirs" and in the shares of Rhodes's Chartered Company of South Africa. Had the basic elements for a "trade advance" not been so sound, the more unscrupulous side of the Stock Exchange

¹ Cf. Halévy, *History of the English People, Epilogue, 1895-1905* (Pelican ed.), i, 19-20, 25: "It was generally felt—and the writer bases this assertion not on the evidence of documents which he had consulted but on his personal reminiscences—that the election of 1895 marked a turning-point in the moral and political history of the British people . . . there was a widespread disposition to regard the (Liberal) defeat in the summer of 1895 in a more serious light and to believe that for the renovated Conservative party it might well prove the beginning of an epoch of continuous rule comparable to the rule of the Liberals throughout the middle of the century."

² Cf. *British Almanac*, 1897, pp. 353-4. Revenue for the Budget year 1895-6, for example, was £5,812,000 in excess of the estimates, and Clearing House Returns for 1895 were nearly twenty per cent above those of 1894.

might well have strangled "prosperity" in its swaddling-clothes. As it was, the tremendous collapse in the value of the "Kaffir" gold-mining shares that had been "unloaded" upon a trustful public during the summer of 1895 shook "confidence" very roughly in all the speculative scrip not yet "disposed of".¹ From one point of view the "Jameson Raid" was a Stock Exchange operation in depressed "Chartered" and "Kaffirs".

As is well known, the personality and policy of Joseph Chamberlain came to play an increasing part in the calculations of the speculators of Throgmorton Street, Capetown and Johannesburg. When Conservative caution had edged him from the Exchequer, which he would perhaps have liked,² Chamberlain had elected to go to the Colonial Office, resolved apparently to initiate decisive new trends in Imperial policy. Lord Rosebery had, in his time, cast himself for the part of the "Radical Jingo" in a way that had made some Tory tacticians anxious for a space.³ But even though Rosebery had lectured his party on the need for "pegging out claims for the future" and the duty and advantage of filling as large a part of the earth with Anglo-Saxons as possible,⁴ the most deeply rooted instincts of Radicalism had been thoroughly against him. He was fated, in fact, to increase the strains and stresses among Gladstonians instead of contributing to their salvation. Joseph Chamberlain was destined to do better as the "Radical Jingo", though it should be remembered that that was partly because he was working with a party traditionally "Empire-minded".

One of Chamberlain's first pronouncements on taking office had been a promise not to neglect the interests of Britain's "undeveloped estates" in the more backward dependencies of West

¹ Cf. *British Almanac*, 1897, p. 355: "The boom in South African Gold Mining Shares, which came to an end in October 1895, gave place to a collapse of the first magnitude, the reaction being intensified by the refusal of the London banks to take any more of the continental finance paper, the manufacture of which had previously helped to inflate the market."

² Cf. Garvin's *Chamberlain*, iii, p. 5, for Lord Salisbury's original offer of the Home Secretaryship. Balfour, more expansive or less cautious than his uncle, spoke of the Exchequer though, perhaps, not without a foreknowledge that Chamberlain could not accept it without wounding Goschen. Goschen became First Lord, and the Exchequer went to the Conservative Hicks-Beach.

³ Cf. Sir E. Ashmead-Bartlett, M.P., in the *North American Review*, June 1894, p. 671: "Lord Rosebery is posing as a Radical 'Jingo', a very unusual but formidable combination. This imperialism renders him popular with educated Englishmen, and makes him a more difficult leader for Conservative politicians to attack than Mr. Gladstone was, or than Sir William Harcourt would have been. . . ."

⁴ Cf. *The Times*, March 2, 1893, for Rosebery's speech of March 1st to the Royal Colonial Institute.

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Africa and the West Indies. Especially was improvement to be undertaken in means of communication. But the characteristic mixture of motive that forced on the new Imperialism is best seen in the speech Chamberlain delivered to a deputation of influential merchants the day after he had introduced the House of Commons to the "new policy":¹

"As to the general principle," he said, "I go certainly as far as the farthest of you go; and I am very anxious that my fellow-countrymen should understand that we hope to develop the resources of such Colonies as those of which you have been speaking to the fullest extent. It is only in such developments that I see any solution of those social problems by which we are surrounded. Plenty of employment and a contented people go together, and there is no way of securing plenty of employment except by creating new markets and developing the old ones. The only dominion which in any way compared with the British dominion was that of the Romans, and it was to the credit of the Romans that they left behind them, wherever they went, traces of their passage and their civilisation in the form of admirable public works. I am sorry to say that Great Britain has largely neglected its duty in that respect in the countries under her care. I admit to you, as I did to the House of Commons last night, that it is in a certain sense a new policy. It is a great policy. It is one, no doubt, open to criticism and to the fullest consideration. You cannot undertake a policy of this kind without a certain amount of risk; but if the people of this country, out of their superfluous wealth, are not willing to invest some of it in the development of what I have called their great estate, then I see no future for these countries, and I think it would probably have been better if they had never come under our rule. . . . You may rest assured that every assistance that we can give will be given. . . . The Lagos Railway may be said to have almost commenced. . . . The Gold Coast Railway has been surveyed. . . . In Sierra Leone the survey has been completed for 150 miles. . . ."

A time of Stock Exchange "boom" and "Imperial development" hardly allowed the "Armenian massacres" sensibly to alter the course of British policy. Gladstone tried hard, indeed, to give a lead in the last "campaign" of his life and felt that, if he had but had the strength of twenty years back, he might have succeeded in pushing the "Armenian Question" to the forefront of British politics as he had once pushed that of Bulgaria.² But Salisbury did

¹ S. H. Jeyes, *Mr. Chamberlain*, pp. 389-90.

² Cf. *The Times*, August 7th, for the aged statesman's speech at Chester on August 6th. On September 24, 1896, he addressed a great meeting in Liverpool, and in October contributed to the *Nineteenth Century* on "The Massacres in Turkey".

not, like Disraeli, expose himself to attack by opposing the rest of the Great Powers in aid of the Turk. In fact he made it plain that his Government, while not prepared to act alone, was ready to go farther in joint pressure upon the Sultan than any other Great Power, Russia included. As, indeed, complex Russian imperialist considerations proved the main barrier to such effective joint pressure, the Armenian Question could hardly be turned into a party issue, capable of attracting towards the Opposition all the non-political haters of cruelty and oppression. Here is one sorrowful Gladstonian M.P. reporting upon the lack of interest in Liverpool and the country generally:¹

I never listened to such harrowing stories of human suffering. . . . I was afflicted with insomnia, caused by the shocking accounts that reached us, and when the Thoumaians asked me to get up a public meeting I willingly complied. I was greatly disappointed with the apathy of the public. I found it almost impossible to get the co-operation of leading citizens of either Party. The contrast was extraordinary between the feeling caused by the Bulgarian massacres in the Russo-Turkish War when Mr. Gladstone set fire to the heather . . . and the tame way in which the news of far greater massacres in Armenia was now received. I can only account for it by the theory that faith and zeal were under an eclipse in Great Britain. All good causes that involved self-sacrifice were equally depressed. Nations have periods of moral ascent and decline. As the Restoration succeeded the Commonwealth, as the vice of Charles II followed the Puritan sternness of Cromwell, so, when Mr. Gladstone's afflatus was withdrawn, a great downward reaction occurred. No doubt the difficulty of intervening was great. The risk of a European war was not to be despised. . . .

We succeeded in getting up a large and enthusiastic meeting at Hope Hall . . . but we failed to induce any of the leaders to take part except Mr. Watts, late Lord Mayor. . . . I went soon after to Edinburgh and addressed a large meeting there. The *Scotsman* ridiculed the movement and scarcely reported the meeting. Indeed, the Tory and Unionist Press seemed to think that espousing the Armenian cause meant a censure on the Government. . . .

The "country", it must be admitted, was in a "realist" mood and wanted to be left alone to enjoy the fruits of trade expansion and "Imperial development". Rough reminders were to come before long, in the shape of President Cleveland's Message, the Boers' capture of Dr. Jameson, and the Kaiser's Telegram, that the

¹ Samuel Smith, M.P., *My Life-Work*, pp. 339-40. Smith introduced the "Armenian horrors" into the debate on the Address in 1896 and made them also the subject of a motion on March 3rd.

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Imperialist path had thorns and briers of its own. But that was hardly foreseen, perhaps, in the confident days of the September ultimatum to China,¹ the October ultimatum to Venezuela,² and the dispatch, during November, of troops against Prempeh, the dusky King of Ashanti, who had disregarded yet another British ultimatum.³

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1896, p. 378: "September 28, 1895. The British Government presented an ultimatum to China in consequence of their laxity in investigating the massacres of missionaries."

² *Ibid.*, "October 21. Announcement in the *St. James's Gazette* that an ultimatum was on its way to Venezuela in connection with the outrages against British subjects committed in January last."

³ *Ibid.*, p. 369: "The first detachment of troops for Ashanti left the Mersey for Cape Coast Castle."

CHAPTER XIII

LORD SALISBURY'S FIRST TROUBLES, 1895-6

"Highbury, December 26, 1895—My dear Salisbury, I have received private information that a rising in Johannesburg is imminent and will probably take place in the course of the next few days.

"The state of affairs in the Transvaal has been threatening trouble of this kind for some time, and I have given secret instructions to Sir Hercules Robinson. . . .

"The War Office has arranged that two regiments, one from Bombay, and one from Barbadoes, shall call at the Cape about the middle of January. I think that the outbreak will be at the end of this month, but we have, of course, our usual garrison at the Cape, and Rhodes has the Bechuanaland Police.

"There is nothing more to be done but to watch the event, which we have done nothing to provoke. If the rising is successful it ought to turn to our advantage."

Joseph Chamberlain prepares the Prime Minister.

"I suppose we were wrong, were madmen,
Still I think at the Judgement Day,
When God sifts the good from the bad men,
There'll be something more to say.

"We were wrong, but we aren't half sorry,
And as one of the baffled band,
I would rather have had that foray
Than the crushings of all the Rand."

The Times prints the Poet Laureate's unrepentant doggerel on the Jameson Raid.

"Take the question of religious instruction. That question, we hoped, was happily settled. For twenty-five years religious instruction has been given in Board Schools, and given with testimonies of excellence not merely from authorities that are supposed to be impartial, but from bishops and archbishops. Now that question is dragged forth and flung down on the table of the House of Commons. We are told we must gratify the anxiety of pious parents to have their children taught in the dogmas which they themselves believe. I do not believe these pious parents have had their children thus uninstructed during the last quarter of a century. . . . But what

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is coming under the 27th clause of this Bill is this. There will be a struggle of sects over the (Board School) children of indifferent parents to secure them for their particular dogmatic teaching."

Lord Rosebery attacks the abortive Education Bill,
May 15, 1896.

ON December 17, 1895, a special Message to Congress from President Cleveland was announced which sounded dangerously like an ultimatum to England. Dissatisfied with what was considered English bullying of Venezuela on the subject of the true limits of British Guiana, the American Government had been further provoked by two dispatches of November 26th from Lord Salisbury. In these, the master of "flouts and jeers" had certainly allowed himself too free a scope in traversing the Monroe Doctrine, denying the United States a *locus standi* in the Venezuelan-British dispute, and declining to "submit to the arbitration of another Power, or of foreign jurists, however eminent, claims based on the extravagant pretensions of Spanish officials in the last century". When the American Government, in reply, publicly accused the British Government of refusing arbitration and publicly prepared, with the aid of Congress and amid the enthusiastic approval of both Americas, to assume jurisdiction over the dispute by appointing a Boundary Commission, an Anglo-American War became a distinct possibility. War was, in fact, avoided but Lord Salisbury must often have seen reason, before the dispute was settled, to regret his dispatches of November 26th. The Opposition Front Bench, indeed, "patriotically" refrained from making a bad situation worse by jeering at the spectacle of the writer of the bold dispatches of November 26th consenting ultimately to supply evidence of the British case against Venezuela to the American Boundary Commission.¹ But Opposition members naturally held themselves free, before very long, to wax sarcastic over those who had voted for Lord Salisbury's followers at the General Election in order to allow that politician to "recover peace with honour".²

The American imbroglio was followed by another in South Africa which, fortunately for the Government, the Opposition

¹ Cf. R. C. K. Ensor, *England, 1870-1914*, p. 230. Ensor, however, condemns the Cleveland Message in strong language without pointing out the unnecessary offensiveness, in American eyes, of the Salisbury dispatches which had provoked it.

² Cf. *Northern Echo*, January 21, 1896: "What may strike a party politician is the remarkable fact that all this turmoil, struggle and international excitement has grown up since the late Government left office. It is not for us to say that Lord Salisbury is not a heaven-born Foreign Minister. We have had sufficient testimony to that fact; everybody said so, and 'what everybody says must be true'. And yet still a lingering doubt rests in the minds of those who have perused their newspapers since the last General Election. . . ."

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Front Bench again—and with perhaps less ultimate justification—scrupled to use in discredit of a British Ministry facing great anxieties abroad. Just because British honour had been besmirched and British prestige gravely injured by the arrant and unsuccessful knavery associated with the Jameson Raid, “responsible” British politicians, with the unsolved Venuzeulan question in mind, not to mention the yet undecided fate both of the captured raiders and the arrested British “rebels” of Johannesburg, necessarily found themselves driven to an attitude of cautious waiting for “fuller information”. After Parliament assembled, indeed, on February 11, 1896, Labouchere, the mocking Radical authority on Rhodes’s dubious use of his “Chartered” South Africa Company ever since 1889, moved for a much wider inquiry into the Company’s financial and political history than that for which the Government was prepared. But Harcourt, already engaged in negotiations behind the scenes for the appointment of a Select Committee of Inquiry as soon as the numerous current difficulties with the Transvaal should have been ended, could give no Front Bench sanction, and Labouchere’s amendment to the Address had to be withdrawn, without a Division.¹

There were Radical politicians who, during the Boer War, came to consider that they had been remiss in not insisting, in 1896, on a much stronger line by their Front Bench, a line that would have exposed Chamberlain’s underground contacts with Rhodes and the Johannesburg rebels,² and so rendered him powerless to do further harm in South Africa.³ That was, perhaps, to forget the dexterity with which Chamberlain, in circumstances of considerable political peril, extricated himself from his dangers and contrived to ride the storm of January 1896 as the “great

¹ *Hansard*, February 14, 1896.

² Cf. Garvin’s *Chamberlain*, iii, p. 83, for Chamberlain’s private confession to Lady Lugard in 1897: “You put me on my honour. Very well. The fact is I can hardly say what I knew and what I did not. I did not want to know too much. Of course I knew of the precautions, the preparations, if you like, in view of the expected trouble in Johannesburg but I never could have imagined that Jameson would take the bit between his teeth.”

³ Cf. Samuel Smith, *My Life-Work*, p. 346: “After the Raid, a South African war became inevitable, unless complete reparation and disavowal were rendered by our Government. The very first condition was the punishment of Rhodes, the chief culprit, and the abrogation of the charter of the South African Company, which was deeply implicated. But this was not done. Rhodes came to England and was received as a patriot. Only the minor offenders got a short term of imprisonment. The public conscience was demoralised. An abortive inquiry was held by Parliament, and a veil of mystery hung over certain of its proceedings which has not been dispelled to this day! (1902).”

statesman" looked to by all parties for a South Africa settlement.¹ Yet it was true, none the less, that the Opposition's apparently benevolent tolerance of Chamberlain's continued presence at the Colonial Office, combined with the enthusiastic welcome accorded to the leaders of the Jameson Raid in the very Bow Street Court which saw the opening of the prosecution for which the Boers had surrendered them, produced one fatal conviction in Kruger's mind. Justice was not to be looked for from any set of men likely to hold effective power in England.²

Yet fully to understand Harcourt's dilemma early in 1896, it is necessary to remember another thing, the exacerbated "patriotism" that was excited by Germany's attempted intervention at Johannesburg in a manner at once more injurious and less excusable than America's in Venezuela. British explosions of anger about the Kaiser's congratulatory telegram to President Kruger and his abortive plan to march marines, landed in Portuguese East Africa, to Johannesburg "in defence of German interests", were the more furious³ in that Germany had hitherto been treated as a useful

¹ Cf. the bitter comments of the Radical *Northern Echo* after Chamberlain, having decided that Jameson's premature "taking the bit between his teeth" would ruin all, put the Raid under official British ban, and in virtue of this "statesmanlike moderation" won, after the Raid had failed ignominiously, great applause in Britain for far-sightedness, and from the Boers (who were, however, not deceived) the surrender of Dr. Jameson and his followers for punishment under British law. On January 20th the *Northern Echo* commented sardonically thus: "CHAMBERLAIN REFULGENT. Mr. Chamberlain has bulked in the public eye recently with a bigness which must have satisfied even his characteristic vanity. Applauded on his timely visit to the theatre and his judiciously advertised journey to Birmingham, and the recipient of even Mr. Balfour's fulsome panegyric, he has undoubtedly made an excellent start in that hunt for popularity which those who know him best assert is his ruling passion."

² Cf. even a Radical paper like the *Northern Echo* for the remarkable success that had been won by unscrupulous "Chartered" propaganda at the time of the Raid. After the "Chartered" agents had put out the story that Jameson had moved on Johannesburg in order to save imperilled British women and children there—surely one of the most nauseous pieces of hypocrisy even of the nineteenth century—the *Northern Echo* was induced to print the following (January 3rd): "We pleaded yesterday that Dr. Jameson should not be judged harshly. We were of opinion that a man of his calibre would not commit . . . an act of war without very serious cause and provocation . . . we cannot admit much sympathy for the Boers. The Boers with the obstinacy of their Dutch race had goaded Englishmen past endurance by their refusal either to govern their country well or to permit Englishmen to take a share in mending matters. . . ."

³ Once again a halfpenny Radical daily, printed two hundred and fifty miles from London and normally completely anti-Jingo, gives a more valuable illustration of the deep-seated popular temper than anything printed in London. Here is the *Northern Echo* of January 13th lashing out not only against the Kaiser's telegram and Germany generally but even against Queen Victoria and the pro-German influences round her: "That the German Emperor's gross outrage on international decency should have caused dismay in Court circles," wrote the

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friend, receiving, it was claimed, many colonial *pourboires* in return for her presumed readiness to make common cause with England if ever Franco-Russian "provocation" should grow "intolerable". When Germany and the United States joined France and Russia in making trouble for the British Empire, British "public opinion", already dexterously convinced by Chamberlain of the essential "moderation" of his South African policy, cried for a piece of bluster almost as theatrical and dangerous as the Kaiser's.¹ Amid uproarious applause from the noisiest elements in the "Empire", which was held to have rallied famously to the "Mother Country" in her "splendid isolation", a powerful "Flying Squadron" was gathered with all speed, ready for naval action against Germany or any other country or combination of countries, seeking a quarrel with Britain. Nor was this display of overwhelming offensive strength deemed sufficient in itself. Preparations were begun to lay before the House of Commons plans for another great addition to Britain's naval power, plans, of course, not in replacement, but in supplementation of the vast Hamilton programme of 1889 and the vaster Spencer programme of 1894. And in the debating of March 2, 5, and 9, 1896, the Opposition Front Bench again found it wise to refrain from making trouble and left the work of criticism and opposition to

Northern Echo, "is not at all surprising. This dismay will not have been lessened by the emphatic unanimity with which the British press and public have condemned the Kaiser's interpolation [*sic*] in a matter with which he is in no way concerned. There is every reason however to believe that the incident will in one important respect prove to be a blessing in disguise. It has long been patent that the feelings of reverence entertained by Englishmen for the throne have been seriously weakened by its occupant's extreme partiality for her German connections. . . . This relationship, too, has undoubtedly been an important factor in inducing Tory Ministers to accord such generous latitude to Germany in the matter of acquiring territory in South Africa and other places. . . . Germany has shown her gratitude by seeking to drive us from South Africa altogether. In so doing she is only carrying out her traditional selfish policy of greed and lust for dominion. Whatever some people may say of our policy of colonial exclusion, it can at all events be pleaded that wherever we colonise we spread around us the blessings of civilisation. We are the precursors of that freedom which with its concomitant enlightenment raises the savage . . . to something of the true dignity of a human being . . . there has been nothing in our conduct since the days of Clive and Hastings approaching the tyrannical cruelty which forms the German method of civilisation in the Cameroons. He would be a bold man, in fact, who dared to lay his hand on any portion of the map of the world and say 'here Germany did good'. . . ."

¹ "I express to you," the Kaiser's telegram to Kruger had read, "my sincere congratulations that without appealing to the help of friendly powers you and your people have succeeded in repelling with your own forces the armed bands which had broken into your country and in maintaining the independence of your country against foreign aggression."

Radical irregulars of the Economy or Disarmament-Arbitration Schools.¹

If the Opposition Front Bench's course was not heroic, it was, at least, electorally satisfactory. The January by-elections, held during the violent outbursts of injured "patriotic" feeling following on the Kruger telegram, had actually seen two London Conservative majorities increased, large though they had originally been. Very different was the state of things in a set of three further by-elections held during February, when "patriotic" fervour was on the wane and some realisation was spreading that Salisbury's presence at the Foreign Office was not, of itself, a guarantee of freedom from foreign troubles. On February 22nd there was a Liberal gain at Southampton, and at the Lichfield by-election of February 26th, a Liberal majority was notably increased. Meanwhile Montrose Burghs had not only greatly increased another Liberal majority but, in doing so, had strengthened the Opposition Front Bench by returning John Morley. When the second half of March saw the Government undertaking to advance on the Sudan, partly as a sop to the offended Kaiser (who desired to help his defeated Italian allies, expelled from Abyssinia, to hold, at least, Eritrea against the Dervishes), but partly also to restore British prestige damaged by the Jameson Raid² Morley agreed to lead the Radical attack. As Egypt, despite British assertions to the contrary, neither desired nor could afford the Sudanese hostilities thrust upon her in the British Government's interests,³ Morley's case was a strong one,

¹ Cf. *The Burden of Armaments, A Plea for Retrenchment by the Cobden Club* (1905), for the Economy School's view of the Goschen programme of 1896 and its forerunners.

² Cf. W. S. Blunt, *My Diaries, 1888-1914*: "It is announced that an advance is to be made immediately to Dongola by arrangement with the German and Austrian Governments, so as to make a diversion in favour of the Italians at Kassala. . . . Even now I can hardly believe it, it would be a most flagrant sacrifice of Egyptian for European interests, although there would probably be little resistance at Dongola; it must entail a reopening of the war with the Sudan, and what has Italy done for Egypt to deserve Egyptian help?" This was on March 16th. On March 20th Blunt wrote: "I find that the facts are even more damning to our Government than I had supposed . . . the thing having been decided by Lord Salisbury 'over Lord Cromer's head' who had strongly disapproved of it."

³ *Ibid.*, March 24th, for Lord Salisbury blandly explaining to the objecting Khedive that the hostilities were decided on "to satisfy Egyptian opinion". On March 25th, after more misleading blandness of this kind in the House of Lords, Blunt, who was on the spot in Egypt, wrote: "The English papers of the 17th and 18th came to-day. Lord Salisbury's statement in the House of Lords is amazing. He has made no such deliberate misstatement of an important truth since the Congress of Berlin."

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and the Division of 145-288 on March 20th did the Opposition no harm. If, indeed, some of the unpalatable facts finally laid before the House by Labouchere, on June 5th, had been available on March 20th, the Sudanese adventure might have been entered upon less lightheartedly. It is characteristic of some of the unlovely aspects of Imperialism¹ that Salisbury should have been driven publicly to assert Egypt's pressing desire for a Sudan campaign and that Kitchener and his military should have tried to produce a "victory" before Labouchere's motion came on on June 5th.²

If, on North Africa, candid critics had to confess to some distaste for the methods "necessarily" forced upon Britain by Empire requirements, the South African situation of 1896 was even more unsatisfactory, though for another reason. Right up to June 11th the wily President Kruger of the Transvaal, who had early and wisely amnestied the Johannesburg rank and file, skilfully used the undecided fate of their leaders to keep Chamberlain anxious and, if possible, inclined to surrender the British claim to "suzerainty" in return for a "fair" settlement of Uitlander grievances on the Rand. When, on June 10th, the four principal Uitlander "rebels" were finally given the chance to buy their freedom, Kruger, though he had failed to shake Chamberlain's tenacious hold on the suzerainty claim, emerged from the Raid's aftermath with the advantage of having established an apparently complete moral superiority over Britain without surrendering an inch on the Uitlander problem. Meanwhile some of the disadvantages of over-sanguine Imperialism were being even more strikingly demonstrated in Rhodesia. As a result of the tangled skein of intrigue preceding the Jameson Raid, parts of Bechuanaland, adjacent to the Transvaal, had been made over to the Chartered Company to permit, it was alleged, the rapid development of

¹ Cf. W. S. Blunt, *My Diaries*, April 10th, for one of the unloveliest as confessed to Blunt by the high Anglo-Egyptian official Gorst, of whom he wrote: "He is much averse to the seizure of black men, as practised by the Sirdar Kitchener, for the Egyptian army, and told me confidentially that he had the intention of putting a stop to it as it is quite illegal. But the campaign had interfered with his project. There has been a general raid on all negroes in Egypt. They are seized and forced to serve in the army on very small pay . . . and are there practically slaves for life—or rather for as long as they are able to serve—for when past work in the army, they are pitilessly cast adrift without pension or provision of any kind. Yet we English pretend that our mission in Africa is to put down slave-raiding and slavery."

² Cf. *Ibid.*, June 8th: "There is news of a 'victory' in the Sudan at Ferkeh, come, however, just too late to serve as an answer by the Government in Parliament. Labouchere rushed this debate on Friday, and it came off most successfully, whereas the battle, which I have little doubt was fought by order from Downing Street, was only fought on Sunday."

railway connection between Rhodesia and the Cape but, to serve, in fact, as a jumping-off ground for Company police sent by hundreds from Rhodesia before the Raid.¹ By March 1896 the Matabele, stirred by reports of the capture of their conquerors and tempted by Rhodesia's emptiness of police, were ready for the wild and desperate rising that seemed, until August, repeatedly on the verge of overthrowing British authority and annihilating the white community.² It was plainly not domestic politics alone which, early in June, produced two remarkable Opposition gains from Conservatives, the one in Wick Burghs and the other, at the opposite end of the country, in the Frome division of Somerset.³

But if the chequered Imperial courses pursued by the Government had much to do with reviving Opposition spirit, domestic politics possibly had more. Certainly, by-election results encouraged the Radical Opposition to persist, despite Ministers' great majority, in the remarkable fight it was making against the two leading domestic measures of the Government—the Agricultural Rating Bill and the Education Bill. Ministers had introduced the Agricultural Rating Bill as their own partial solution to the problem of "agricultural distress" which, they could claim, had been admitted by the Gladstone and Rosebery Governments to be of so serious a character that it defeated the attempt of their Royal Commission, appointed in 1893, to report in time for Liberal legislation. But the aid Conservatives proposed to find

¹ Garvin's *Chamberlain*, iii, 30-56, tells the story from a viewpoint over-favourable to Chamberlain who is too lavishly praised for refusing the Company, on the entreaty of Bechuana chiefs who had come to England, the whole of the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Yet even Garvin admits that "beyond doubt he (Chamberlain) recognised that the new force to be formed at Pitsani might serve as first aid should intervention by the British Government at Johannesburg become necessary."

² Cf. Younghusband's *South Africa of To-day* (1897) for incidental admissions of the provocation to and the unanimity of the revolt as: "... the people, not having been tactfully and sympathetically, but, on the contrary, harshly and roughly treated rose in revolt: what is remarkable is that they were able to combine as they did, for they had no recognised chief to rally round, and they had no religious enthusiasm to bind them together. Under ordinary circumstances they probably never would have combined. . . . The result was an outbreak of brutal savagery never before equalled in South African history. There was no warning. No attempt was made to take captives, and no quarter was given. Suddenly wherever white men or women could be found in isolated positions away from the towns, they were cruelly murdered. . . . As news of these frightful atrocities reached the towns . . . and as the people realised their precarious position, the wildest panic often occurred . . . deeds of vengeance were committed which few would feel inclined to dwell upon now in the after-calm. . . . The results of the war were not so decisive as might have been wished. . . ."

³ *British Almanac*, 1897, p. 358.

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for "distressed" agriculture was the remission of half the rates on farm land and buildings, the deficiency in local authorities' revenues to be made good by the Exchequer from the yield of Harcourt's Estate Duty. Simply to halve the rates without taking the amplest security that the working farmer would get the full benefit of the remission was, in Radical eyes, merely to permit the landowner to annex, soon or late, the whole of the rate-decrease in the shape of the rent-increment derivable from property freed from half its former rate-burdens. Owners of agricultural property had, of course, suffered a serious decline of income since "agricultural depression" had begun late in the 1870's. But they were the last class, it was claimed, that had a right to dip their hands into the taxpayer's pocket especially on the hypocritical pretence that the Exchequer subsidy in aid of rates was only intended to aid the working farmer.¹

Radicals had, of course, long been acting as the self-appointed protectors of the rural population against its landlords. Even in England, Allotments and Small Holdings legislation for the labourer and Agricultural Holdings protection for the farmer—not to mention the Ground Game Act of 1880 and the Local Government Acts of 1888 and 1894—showed that some other positive good might result for the countryside than a mere quota of Radical members. If the great tenant-advantages that had been obtained for Ireland—advantages actually in course of renewed expansion during the 1896 Session through a diluted Conservative version of Morley's Land Law Bill—could not be fairly claimed as equally urgent throughout Britain, Highland Scotland, at least, had found in the Crofters Act of 1886, and the subsequent activities of the Crofters Commission, important benefits which, it claimed, now needed expansion almost to the Irish scale if Highland rural life were not to be swept away altogether in the flood of agricultural depression.² Wales, too, had in 1893 obtained

¹ Cf. F. A. Channing, *Memories of Midland Politics, 1885-1910*, for the Radical member for E. Northants, speaking to his constituency's spring meeting of 1896: "Agriculture had borne more than its share of local burdens, but to allocate Harcourt surpluses to landowners was to mock farmers' wants. . . . The real reason farm rates were so heavy was that landlords maintained fictitious values by excessive rents. Why give millions more without guarantees of relief to the real sufferers, the working agriculturists?"

² Cf. *The Liberal Platform, 1895*, for a special chapter on Crofter legislation and its results. The Liberal Government of 1895 claimed to have a further Crofters Act ready, based on the Report of a Royal Commission appointed by Gladstone in 1892 and popularly known as the "Deer Forests Commission".

from the Gladstone Government a Royal Commission on a land situation which the Welsh majority claimed to be almost as unhealthy as that of Ireland, and for the same reason—the fundamental lack of sympathy between an English landlord-caste, still exploiting the results of harsh and ancient conquest to the full, and the mass of the population, differing in race, language, and religious rite from the legal lords of the soil.¹

For a time there had been the brightest hopes in the Principality that, from the Welsh Land Commission, "Tenant Right" would result, a Land Court, empowered to effect judicial reductions of rent and the scaling-down or cancellation of arrears. Even though the Welsh Land Commission of 1893 composed, according to the landowners, of "two parts Radical to one part Unionist"² was endeavouring to complete a Report before the end of 1896 that might still achieve something substantial for Welsh tenancies, its best immediate hopes had plainly gone with the 1895 Elections. That is, perhaps, why the most determined resistance to the Agricultural Rating Bill for England and Wales came from the Welsh Radicals among whom the still comparatively youthful Lloyd George found a new chance of distinguishing himself. Stimulated by Welsh pressure, a much stiffer and more promising Opposition fight was, in fact, undertaken on behalf of all British tenant-farmers than had seemed possible at first.³ The fact that

¹ Cf. *Welsh Land Commission Report* (1896): "Differences of race and language, religious and sectarian rivalries, political divisions and social jealousies combined to accentuate, to an extraordinary degree, the feelings engendered by an unequal distribution of wealth and an acute economic crisis. . . ."

² J. E. Vincent, *The Land Question in South Wales*, p. 3. This "defence of the Landowners of South Wales and Monmouthshire" treated the Commission as follows: "Now of the nine Commissioners in this case Lord Carrington was known as a man of advanced Radical opinions, Mr. Brynmor Jones was the representative of a Gladstonian constituency, Mr. Grove was a Radical Chairman of a County Council, Mr. Richard Jones was an active worker in the Radical cause, Mr. Griffiths was a strong Radical and Professor Rhys a person of uncertain politics might be described as a very embodiment of Cymric genius."

³ Cf. *Hansard*, August 3rd, 4th and 5th, for the Committee struggle on the Scottish Rating Bill after the Bill for England and Wales had aroused such obstinate opposition that the Report stage had dragged over June 23rd, 24th, 25th, 29th and 30th and a last protest, defeated by 292 votes against 140, had been made at Third Reading on July 1st. H. Du Parcq, *Life of David Lloyd George*, i, 177, has the following: "To Mr. Lloyd George (said the representative of the *Daily Chronicle*)—a man of great ability, ingenuity, force and readiness of mind—must be put the first beginnings of the fight on the Agricultural Rating Bill. Mr. Lloyd George has a very acute temperament trained in legal subtleties, combined with a rapid parliamentary judgement. . . . He has a remarkable eye for weak points in debate, and his keen criticisms have often been caught up later by the Front Opposition Bench, and been adopted as the main line of attack."

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there was some restiveness among Unionist industrialists about Bills to "bestow two millions annually upon the landlords" was another encouraging sign. There were, of course, urban "hard cases"¹ and, indeed, the industrial interests who, supported often by "Labour", had been urging for years some Derating of Machinery in view of "dangerous foreign competition", advanced claims of their own to share in any Rating benefits made possible by the unexpectedly golden yield of Harcourt's "Radical" Death Duties.

The basis of Radical attack on the Government's Agricultural Rating legislation was the old one that it made no provision for dividing rating liability between landlord and tenant but still, for the most part, left it burdening the tenant alone. This case had always attracted tenants who, closing their eyes to the view that their rating liability meant that their rents were lower than they otherwise would be, went on hoping that Radicals might help them to force half their rates upon the "estate" and yet protect them from suffering a corresponding increase of rent. There were, of course, many Radicals "anti-landlord" enough to regard almost anybody's annexation of a part of the landlord's rent as justifiable at any time, but this could hardly be the position of an Opposition Front Bench, anxious to prove that most far-sighted landlords were now themselves in favour of a visible instead of an invisible charge on their rents for "local burdens". But even Opposition Front Benchers were induced to take the view that to accept the Government Bill unamended would entail the eventual absorption of the whole two millions of Rating Reliefs in rent,² and that the

¹ Cf. *Lord Rosebery's Speeches, 1874-1896*, for a speech at Newton Abbot on May 15, 1896, which, after pointing out that the agricultural labourer was going to get nothing from the Bill, proceeded: "... if the agricultural class was the only class that needed relief as regards their rates I should say there was a good deal to be said for the proposals of the Government; but unfortunately the pinch is at least as great on the urban ratepayers as well. And you now are putting the urban ratepayer in this position—where he pays a tax he is to be pinched by his own rates and additionally pinched by taxation in order to pay half the rates of the tenant-farmer of this country. . . ."

² Cf. *Ibid.*, for a jocular treatment by the ex-Premier in a Devonshire speech of May 15th: "I should like to congratulate any of those . . . who are going to have half their rates paid. . . . It is true, as the Government admits, that the benefit will ultimately go to the landlord; but then, as Mr. Balfour says, you cannot benefit one class of agriculturists without benefiting all classes of agriculturists, and as far as I collect his reasoning it is this—the tenant-farmer will pay half his rate for the next few years, and that will be his benefit; then the landlord will raise his rent in proportion, and that will be the landlord's benefit; and all the time the British taxpayer . . . will be paying two millions a year to secure these proportions of benefits. That seems to me a fair division enough. The taxpayer will have his share. . . ."

most desirable way of preventing such a consummation was to decree the future imposition of half the rates upon the landlord. On these lines which had the expected appeal to all sitting tenants who presumed, of course, on the difficulty of raising existing rents against them despite the new burden imposed on the "estate", a determined Radical struggle was made¹ and some concessions extorted. Thus the Government agreed that the Acts were to run for five years only so that the whole principle might come up for review again in the light of their actual effects upon the rural tenant and landowner. Moreover a Royal Commission was promised which would undertake the study of the whole problem of Rating Burdens, urban no less than rural. Such things naturally helped Radicals in their electioneering and still allowed them to claim that the Government's concessions had done nothing effective to prevent the final pocketing of the annual two millions by the landlords. And the very pretty dispute on the Irish Land Bill that developed, at the end of the Session, between Irish landlords, backed by a majority of the Peers,² and the Conservative Government itself, merely seemed to give Radicals another stick with which to beat the landlords. These could be pictured as so blindly greedy that they threatened to wreck the plans of their best friends, the Ministers.

The Radical combativeness, displayed during the 1896 Session against very heavy odds, came largely from the spirit and success with which the Government Education Bill had been fought and defeated. For years before 1895 the managers of Voluntary Schools—and especially the Anglican and Catholic clergy—had been complaining bitterly of the steady deterioration of the financial position and educational possibilities of their schools as

¹ Cf. F. A. Channing, *Memories of Midland Politics, 1885-1910*, pp. 181-3, for a leading Back-Bench Radical prepared to "prove" (see *Hansard*, May 18th) from the Farm Accounts submitted to the Royal Commission on Agricultural Depression appointed in 1893 that "tenants had been paying most of the rates and taxes on the land, and that these burdens ought not to fall on them when the landlords were still drawing large rents which the tenants could only pay out of capital, making a loss each year".

² Cf. *Hansard*, August 6th (Lords), for objections to a Government Irish Land Bill whose provisions had been partly adopted from Morley's Bill of 1895 and even offered some hope for the "Evicted Tenants" of the "Plan of Campaign". The Government was defeated three times in succession in Divisions of 125-67, 107-60, and 96-77, and astute Conservative plans of winning Ireland through Land concessions to the peasantry and schools and university concessions to the Catholic hierarchy were momentarily interfered with. Conservatives argued, not untruly, that the customary Irish alliance with urban and "secular" British Radicalism was a most "unnatural" one.

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compared with those of the School Boards. Dependent on voluntary support which was gradually shrinking, not the clerics claimed, because religious zeal was declining but because the compulsory School Board rate was ever growing, these Voluntary Schools were being starved to death, though they saved the School Boards and Exchequer tens of millions of capital costs in the provision of buildings, and millions more annually because they were run far more economically than the Board Schools. And with the Voluntary Schools, if it were permitted, would die, in the clerical view, all prospect of maintaining religion as the vital animating principle in the education of that very large part of the nation's youth whose parents, according to the clerical account, desired religious education above all else, and dreaded the "secularising" tendency of the Board School on their children. In 1895, therefore, most Conservative candidates had been brought to express a benevolent interest in plans for easing the difficulties of the Voluntary Schools and had benefited from the gratitude of the Anglican and Catholic priesthoods, the approval of the more conservative section of the Wesleyans,¹ and the applause of "the vigilant ratepayer", who rightly suspected that a collapse of cheap Voluntary School education would entail the "heavy" costs associated with the further expansion of "unnecessarily elaborate" Board Schools.² And after the Conservative victory, perhaps, on some inspiration from behind the scenes, plans had been laid for a pre-Sessional agitation

¹ The Wesleyans had a large number of Voluntary Schools also, and in parts of the country where they were strong these might be very considerable establishments. Thus such a directory as Whellan's *Durham* (ed. 1894) shows two Wesleyan schools at Sunderland, a large High Day School at West Hartlepool, and further schools at Jarrow, Bishop Auckland, Wolsingham, etc. Many of the Wesleyan schools had been founded before 1870 for, after the Education Act of that year, Wesleyans had been readier than Anglicans or Catholics to let School Boards undertake the expansion of educational provision called for and had concerned themselves mainly with assuring the elections of School Boards who could be trusted to safeguard the interests of "religion" in the Board Schools.

² The "vigilant ratepayer" of these days took many curious forms. In areas where School Boards operated he voted, of course, for "economy" candidates who would keep such 'unnecessary luxuries' as pianos for the singing lessons out of Board Schools, and would, when teachers' salary scales were in question, point to the "excellent work" done by the Voluntary Schools on low salary scales. Moreover he would subscribe to keep Voluntary Schools on their feet as against Board School competition, often privately convinced that he was thus both earning the blessings of the godly and saving himself more in School Board rate than he paid in subscription. In non-School Board areas, dread of "high School Board rates" if the "Voluntary System were allowed to collapse" kept the gentry subscribing to the Voluntary Schools and even maintained such phenomena as "Colliery Schools" built by Colliery Companies not averse to saving themselves expense as the principal local ratepayers.

on behalf of "religious education" and the Voluntary Schools. Certainly, the Education Bill of 1896 had been prepared for in a campaign of meetings,¹ often addressed by a mixed platform of Anglicans and Catholics with an occasional Wesleyan, where he was obtainable, for "Free Church" garnish. But now that men like Hugh Price Hughes, Dr. Scott Lidgett and R. W. Perks, M.P., were rising to increasing influence in Methodism, Wesleyans, who would allow their aversion to purely "secular education" to take them into a Conservative Education manœuvre, were growing noticeably fewer. The events of 1896 and 1897 were, indeed, to prove that Wesleyans were among the hottest opponents of the Conservative Education Bills of those years, and played a large part, with other Nonconformists, in the protests of the newly organised *National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches*.²

The Education Bill of 1896, introduced on March 31st, was to have, in fact, a Parliamentary history full of vexation for the Government. Sir John Gorst, Vice-President of the Committee of Council for Education, had apparently been asked to work into a scheme for the improvement and decentralisation of educational administration,³ which would itself have taxed the resources of the Government to pass, ambitious plans for helping the Voluntary Schools. Why the Government would have needed to be cautious even with a Bill for purely administrative reorganisation

¹ Cf. *Northern Echo*, February 5, 1896, for a suspicious Radical view: "There has been in Middlesbrough what was called a 'monstre' meeting in defence of voluntary schools. . . . After all, if the speeches now being delivered are analysed they amount not so much to pleas for the diffusion of religious knowledge or for the expansion of education as to vulgar and unreasonable requests for further contributions of public money. Given further grants of public money in sufficient measure, the agitation will end. 'A footing of perfect equality' (between Voluntary and Board Schools) means in plain English that private seminaries are to be supported by the taxpayer or ratepayer—they are careful not to distinguish too clearly which pocket is aimed at—and that the voluntary subscribers whose generosity has been trumpeted *ad nauseam* and far beyond its deserts, at any rate in the wealthiest of the religious bodies of this country, are to be still further freed from the not very heavy burden of paying for teaching their own doctrines, supporting their own church, and preserving their own social position. . . ."

² Cf. *Proceedings of the Second National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches held in London, March 9 to 11, 1897* (pp. 246), for an idea of the powerful alliance of Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and Friends that had been gathered, an alliance that was destined to give Conservatives an infinity of trouble on the Education Question (and even on Foreign Policy, not to mention Drink) for many years to come.

³ It was hoped to devolve on County Education Committees not merely many of the school-inspecting and grant-recommending functions of the admittedly over-centralised Education Department but also similar responsibilities in regard to the Poor Law Schools of the Local Government Board and the Industrial Schools of the Home Office.

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was the fact that any Conservative interference with the School Boards instantly aroused Dissenting suspicions of ecclesiastical manœuvre. Dissenters still remembered with bitterness that it was Conservatives who were primarily responsible for 8,000 English parishes being without the Board Schools. Dissenters preferred and that to Conservative effort, above all, it was due that even in places as large as Southport, Wigan, Beverley, Eastbourne, Devizes, Carlisle, Preston, St. Helens, Chester, Salisbury and Burnley, School Board schemes had been defeated and none but Voluntary Schools, mainly Anglican and Catholic, were open to the public.¹ Though, therefore, Sir John Gorst's scheme for setting up, say, in Devonshire, a County Council Education Committee must have profited the 153 School Boards operating there, mostly with very limited parochial views and resources, Sir John Gorst's Bill contained other and more partisan provisions that instantly inflamed Dissenting suspicion against the whole. The County Council Committees, for example, were to receive inspection powers over all "public elementary schools", Board Schools, that is, and Voluntary Schools alike, but the extra 4s. per head annual grant that it would be in their competence to award for the improvement of teachers' salary scales and school equipment was plainly to be confined largely to the Voluntary Schools, every one of which could claim the grant while only the schools of "necessitous School Boards" were eligible. By a very "ingenious" device, moreover, groups of Voluntary Schools could be formed to whom the total amount of grant "earned" by the group could be paid over for expenditure anywhere within the group. Grant, that is, would be paid over to representatives of the Anglican and Catholic hierarchies on behalf of schools that would never receive it because those hierarchies desired to undertake expenditure elsewhere. And, finally, the County Council Committees were given the very dangerous and provocative right to upset, where "suitable" denominational application was made, the Cowper-Temple "undenominational religious education" that had reigned in the Board Schools since the Education Act of 1870. Some Anglican and Catholic advantage was apparently expected to

¹ Cf. *Proceedings of the Second National Council of the Free Churches*, 1897, p. 112, for a bitter speech. The same speaker expressed keen disappointment that some Wesleyans still held rather to the "religious education" party than to those supporting the Board Schools. "It is heartbreaking", he said, "to see the way, in various districts, in which we are opposed by some of our Wesleyan brethren."

result,¹ but there could have been no surer way of stirring up flaming Nonconformist resentment.²

It may be that the Government considered itself invincible because, as a result of private negotiations with the Catholic hierarchy—not to mention transactions on the Irish Land Bill with both Parnellites and Anti-Parnellites—it had apparently assured for the Bill the entire Irish Nationalist vote in the House of Commons. Despite a remarkable and devastating onslaught from Mr. Asquith,³ these tactics certainly brought Ministers, on May 12th, the apparently overwhelming Second Reading Division of 423 votes against 156. But Ministers must soon have had good cause to know that their proposals and their tactics had aroused the greatest hostility among the vast and influential bodies whose chosen spokesmen were men like Dr. Guinness Rogers and the Rev. F. B. Meyer, Dr. Clifford and the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, Dr. Joseph Parker and the Rev. J. H. Shakespeare. Perilous constituency situations were soon being reported from various directions, and open hostility from a large number of the Midland Radicals who had followed Mr. Chamberlain into Liberal-Unionism but were now looking to Mr. George Dixon, M.P. Chamberlain's not wholly approving senior, to bring him to heel.⁴ Moreover, the great and increasing list of amendments piling up for the Committee stage,⁵ and not from the Opposition alone,

¹ Cf. *British Almanac*, 1897, p. 359: "On May 11th the Roman Catholic Hierarchy announced their support of the measure, and nine days later the English Church Union, the recognised voice of the Anglican or Catholic party within the Church of England, pledged its . . . aid. . . . On June 6th the late Archbishop of Canterbury announced a more official Church support to the measure. But just before this, on June 2nd, a representative conference of Nonconformists had decided to oppose the Bill, and their attitude was approved by many of the Low Church party, by the Unitarians, and by the Agnostic school of thought."

² Cf. *The Life of Hugh Price Hughes*, pp. 489-90, for this Methodist leader on "this unspeakable Government and the wretched Bill they have had the audacity to introduce". Hughes resented even more than the sectarian advantages the Bill would bestow, its threat to the Christian union represented by the "Board School Christianity" so derided of the "Higher" and narrower ecclesiastics. Hughes called the Bill a "Bill that would blight the Christianity of this country if they can ever pass it, which I doubt. The wretched little Baptists are to be instructed in one corner, the wretched little Anglicans in another, and the wretched little Methodists in another."

³ Mr. Asquith, in what was reckoned the best speech he had ever made, not merely attacked the sectarian partisanship of the Bill but pointed out that the County Councils had not asked for the suggested Education powers, had no desire for them, and would be quite overburdened by them.

⁴ Mr. Dixon demanded especially the new 4s. grant for all schools alike.

⁵ Cf. *Lord Rosebery's Speeches, 1874-1896*, p. 383: "Within twenty-four hours of the second reading of the Bill, thirty-five folio pages of amendments were put down on the paper of the House of Commons, and that is only a very small portion of the amendments that will be offered. . . ."

Lord Salisbury's First Troubles 1895-6

threatened a somewhat unprepared Government with a grim struggle in Parliament capable, in combination with "sectarian agitation" in the country, of dragging out the Session far beyond their calculations.

The fate of the Bill was settled when the Committee stage began on June 11th and Mr. Balfour ineptly decided to accept, from two Conservatives, an amendment threatening the whole administrative case for the Bill by increasing the number and reducing the character of the suggested Education Committees to operate under it.¹ And the mistake was not rectified by subsequent "firmness" in refusing all amendments, even those promising to help the Bill, or by Mr. Balfour's confession of his difficulties to a Conservative conference held at the Carlton Club on June 15th. His suggestion of a long adjournment from August 12th to January 12th, with its implied despair of passing the Education Bill in any other way than by setting Parliament to work at it again early in 1897 and continuing the Session till it was completed, proved but the precursor of the Education Bill's abandonment on June 22nd. Though the Government promised the reintroduction of the Bill in what, it was hoped, would be the more auspicious circumstances of 1897, Ministers' credit had suffered a damaging blow. Nor could the enactment, before the end of the Session, of their Agricultural Rating measures and their Irish Land Bill be reckoned as fully repairing the damage. Their Rating Bills had been quite energetically blackened as over-favourable to the landowners, and the effect of the Land Bill had been spoiled by last-minute squabbling with the Irish landlords.

Yet, whatever the disappointments of the Parliamentary Session, Ministers doubtless considered that its close left them better off than its beginning. The Venezuela crisis with the United States, the Jameson crisis with the Transvaal, and the Kruger telegram crisis with Germany had all passed by, apparently without permanent damage resulting. The "Flying Squadron" and the new naval programme had impressed the world with Britain's naval

¹ *Hansard*, June 11th, for the amendment freeing boroughs with over 20,000 inhabitants from the educational jurisdiction of the County Council and adding their Borough Councils to the list of educational authorities despite the friction certain with School Boards operating within precisely the same limits as those Borough Councils. The same friction was, of course, certain in the case of the County Boroughs though it might be claimed, in their case, that they were of sufficient standing to resist the temptation of bullying and worrying the School Boards.

might, and what British military prestige had lost from the fiasco of the Jameson Raid had presumably been recovered by Ashanti and Sudanese successes. As for home politics, Ministers must have known that an Opposition leadership so notoriously riven by dissension as was the Rosebery-Harcourt combination was in no position to make the best use of what Parliamentary strength it had. This Parliamentary strength, indeed, had seriously declined in any case since the Irish Nationalists, Parnellite and Anti-Parnellite alike, had resumed their full independence of a Liberal party that had ceased, with Gladstone's retirement, to treat Home Rule as immediate "practical politics". And to encourage Irishmen in their new course, Conservatives had done more than pass a Land Act and throw out feelers to the politicians and the Catholic Bishops on County Councils, University and School financing, and even, in view of the Financial Relations Commission's proceedings, some tax-remissions for Ireland. Early in August 1896 the Conservative Home Secretary had released three Irish "dynamitards" whom Mr. Asquith had always declined to amnesty.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DIAMOND JUBILEE, BEFORE AND AFTER

"30th Aug. (1896). We have had three public events during the week, first Cecil Rhodes has patched up a peace with the Matabeles, heralded in all the daily papers as an heroic act of courage, because he went personally to the Matabele camp to treat. Secondly, our gallant fleet has bombarded Zanzibar. . . . Our papers are again exultant, and raise a cry for annexation on the plea of abolishing slavery in Zanzibar. . . . Zanzibar was a model Arab State, a hundred times more liberal in its ideas than the Government of India. . . . Thirdly, there has been a new great slaying of Armenians at Constantinople, the companion of what took place last year, but on a larger scale. It was begun, as in the first instance, by the Armenian Committee, which seized the Ottoman Bank and threw bombs into the street, their object being to force on a crisis. To this the Moslems retorted with a massacre."

From W. S. BLUNT'S anti-Imperialist *My Diaries*, 1888-1914.

"For the last twenty years, still more during the last twelve, you have been laying your hands with almost frantic eagerness, on every tract of territory adjacent to your own or desirable from any point of view which you thought it desirable to take. . . . I dare say it has been quite right, but . . . you have excited to an almost intolerable degree the envy of other nations. . . . In twelve years you have added to the Empire, whether in the shape of actual annexation, or of dominion, or what is called a sphere of influence, 2,600,000 square miles of territory. . . . I am not less haunted than you are by the horrors of Armenia, by the horrors that have transformed an earthly paradise into an organised hell. For all that, I would not attempt to do away with those horrors by adding to them a horror a hundredfold greater. . . . It is not ours to dispense in this world universally the punishment of wrong and the reward of right. We have to balance, as it were, between two evils, and of the two I cannot balance between the evil of Armenian massacre alone and the evil of Armenian massacre *plus* European war. There is no doubt a certain concord that reigns over the aspect of Europe at this moment. But that concord is chiefly directed, not in your favour, but against you."

Lord Rosebery warns his party against an anti-Sultan adventure executed by Britain, single-handed, October 9, 1896.

English Radicalism 1886-1914

"We stolid English folk—usually so self-contained and so capable of consuming our own smoke—have during the last few weeks been electrified out of our customary phlegmatic mood into something outrivalling Gallic enthusiasm. We have throughout the Empire formed the most gigantic mutual admiration society on record. We have boasted of our progress and prosperity, we have trumpeted forth the might of our ships and guns, we have covered our venerable Sovereign with homage amounting almost to adulation. In this we have done well, though rather more effusively than usual. . . .

"There are thoughts, however, which it is well to bear in mind in this juncture. . . . The Empire was not built up by boasting and bragging nor, although we may have temporarily forgotten the fact, are any of the possessions of which we are proud the exclusive product of the present generation. . . . Our colonies have grown both in loyalty and in prosperity, not so much by the aid of the Mother Country as in spite of it.

"The Jubilee proceedings must leave lasting consequences behind. One of them, we hope, will be the repression, if not suppression, of the grumbles of croakers and alarmists. We shall look rather foolish if, in a brief space of time, after the language of eulogy has been exhausted in describing the mightiness of our fighting strength on the seas, we should have in the House of Commons or elsewhere the old, old story raised that the navy is going to the dogs, that it scarcely exists save on paper, and that nothing but the expenditure of some sum of money so great that the human mind can scarcely grasp it can save the Empire from destruction. It will be a poor sequel, too, to our thanksgiving for commercial prosperity if we have, either in the House of Commons or out of it, any further of those doleful prophecies of coming ruin if we continue the system of free trade."

The *Northern Echo*, June 29, 1897, diplomatically hints Radical objections to some aspects of the Jubilee celebrations.

ONE of the most remarkable events of the 1896 Recess was the aged Gladstone's emergence on September 24th to address a great meeting at Hengler's Circus, Liverpool, in favour of positive British action to stop the atrocities then being perpetrated in the Turkish Empire on the Christian Armenians.¹ Gladstone denied that even the definite British duty, under the Cyprus Convention, of guaranteeing good government in Asia Minor could be held to have been discharged by lecturing the Sultan and making abortive attempts to get the Concert of Europe to take effective action. Since these attempts to prevent Turkish barbarities had failed, Britain was called, both by her positive legal duty and by the even greater claims of humanity, to intervene single-handed with a demand for far-reaching reforms and a determination, if the demand was not met, to break off relations. And to the contention that Russia and Germany had demonstrated such violent dislike of single-handed British intervention as to make war with them and their allies a possibility, or even a probability, if it were undertaken, Gladstone both denied the likelihood, if Britain gave unequivocal guarantees of complete disinterestedness, and asserted that if a coalition of the other Great Powers were, indeed, formed to warn Britain off, Britain could retire with honour and leave the Coalition bearing the responsibility for the result.

Stimulated by Gladstone's support, the already formidable anti-Turkish feeling, cherished particularly in Radical quarters, rose during October to heights that threatened to force Lord Salisbury's hand. The next great event of the Recess, in fact, Lord Rosebery's resignation of the Liberal leadership on October 7th, was precipitated by that statesman's desire to call a warning to the over-impatient of his own party.² Urging that disappointingly

¹ Cf. *News of the World*, September 13, 1896, for what "popular feeling" was even before Gladstone's stimulation. On the front page are a bitter anti-Turkish cartoon and verses, while the two first news-columns are headed by the lines: "THE GREAT ASSASSIN. Popular agitation for the Sultan's deposition. Turkey defies the Powers. Condemnation by Gladstone, Rosebery and Asquith. Action to be taken. British men-of-war steaming to Turkey." Writing of this kind tended to obscure the fact that from the Turkish and possibly from the Russian point of view, the Armenian massacres of 1895 had been provoked by rebellion, and even the dreadful Constantinople pogroms of August 26 and 27, 1896, by the seizure of the Ottoman Bank in Constantinople by armed Armenian revolutionaries.

² Cf. *Lord Rosebery's Speeches, 1874-1896*, for the Edinburgh speech of October 9th explaining his resignation: "I will not speak to you about domestic policy

meagre as had so far been the results of Concert action, England's wisest policy, in the interests of European peace, was not ostentatiously to go into militant and provocative isolation,¹ Rosebery undoubtedly brought the hard-pressed Government great relief. But, as he said, his public disassociation of himself from Gladstone's more popular view, made it difficult for him, despite Gladstone's undimmed private friendship, to retain a Liberal leadership already causing problems enough. The truth was, though Rosebery could not avow the full facts, that he had jumped at the chance, presented by the Armenian agitation, to retire from a situation of acute personal and political discomfort. Even when he was Prime Minister, Rosebery had been edged from a good deal of the realities of power by the chagrined Harcourt's abundant stretching of his rights and prerogatives as Leader of the Commons. Since July 1895 Rosebery had been treated by Harcourt, backed by Radical malcontents hostile to the "Peer Premier", as little more than the leader of the insignificant Liberal minority in the Lords. Only a tough-skinned person would have been able to endure the humiliations and discomforts which Rosebery's position sometimes entailed, and Rosebery, despite the friendly attentions of some of his brother ex-Ministers, more especially Mr. Asquith, finally gave up the attempt to harden his over-sensitive skin.² The resulting Harcourt leadership certainly

to-night, because in the last five weeks, there has come a question before the country which, like a torrent, has swept everything before it. I need not mention it to you. You, I dare say, have taken part in some of the innumerable meetings. . . . Now, gentlemen, I do not for one moment deprecate those meetings. . . . Some of us had begun to fear, from the apathy that prevails on many subjects, that we had grown soft and tepid in our prosperity. . . . That idea, at any rate, is dispelled by this agitation, and even though I cannot go to the full length with it, I rejoice in the spirit which it is proving . . . it seems to me that the enthusiasm of the country needs more guidance than stimulus. It has been stimulated enough, and what it needs at this moment is rather guidance and direction."

¹ Cf. *Lord Rosebery's Speeches, 1874-1896*: "Against the policy of solitary interference in the affairs of the East, I am prepared to fight tooth and nail. The party who support the interest of peace must also be vigilant, and must also be prepared to fight tooth and nail if they do not wish that isolated policy to be carried out. Mr. Gladstone speaks . . . of the phantasm of a European war being excited by any such thing. I believe it is no phantasm at all. I am convinced . . . up to recently . . . there was a fixed and resolute agreement on the part of the Great Powers of Europe, all of them, or nearly all of them, to resist by force any single-handed intervention by England. . . ."

² Cf. *Ibid.*, for a notable omission of Harcourt's name and a notable emphasis on Mr. Asquith's: "I thank Mr. Asquith, and Sir Henry Fowler, and Mr. Bryce and Mr. Arnold Morley, who are all here to-night, for their devoted co-operation with me. If I venture to single out Mr. Asquith from even these four it is because we have been in habits of close and intimate political union . . . consummate and considerable as are his powers of brain, in my opinion his head is not equal to

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seemed to strengthen the Opposition for a time despite the abiding resentments felt by Rosebery's friends.

On the opposite side of politics, meanwhile, plans for a Diamond Jubilee were being matured which should use the occasion for a great demonstration of Imperial power, serviceable both within the Empire and without. Already, in the first half of 1896, Chamberlain had publicly thrown out two Imperial Zollverein feelers though his success, except in exciting discussion, had not been marked.¹ But if the June meeting of the Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, for example, produced disconcertingly wholehearted Free Trade declarations from the Presidents of the Liverpool, Manchester and Swansea Chambers, and a refusal from Victoria, Australia, to consider the surrender of tariffs against British goods for any terms Chamberlain could offer, the Colonial Secretary's pertinacity was well known enough to give the cautious room for anxiety. One of the cautious, in view of his later record, may well have been Chamberlain's own colleague, the Duke of Devonshire, who when taking part in the foundation of a British Empire League on December 3rd, trusted that the mistakes of the Imperial Federation League would be avoided. Setting very modest limits, moreover, to the Imperial Defence programme, certain to come under discussion in Jubilee year, the Duke accepted for Britain the duty of guarding the colonies from organised invasion but held that the colonies themselves should be prepared and able to deal with small descents. In helping to plan grander Jubilee celebrations for 1897 than had taken place in 1887, in inviting Colonial participation on a more imposing scale,² and in aiding an Empire Preference move by Canada, admirably timed for yielding results at the Jubilee Colonial Conference,³ his heart; and it is that rare combination of head and heart which, in my humble judgement, if my prophecy be worth anything, will conduct him to the highest office of the State."

¹ Cf. Garvin's *Chamberlain*, iii, 179-82. The feelers were thrown out in a Canada Club speech of March 25th and a speech to the Chambers of Commerce of the Empire meeting on June 9th.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 185: "At the end of January he informed a glad House of Commons that he had invited the Premiers of all the self-governing Colonies. . . . And they were asked on what we may call Disraelian terms. They were to be State-guests with Royal carriages at their disposal. They were requested to bring picked contingents of troops from each colony. . . . It was an irresistible invitation. They all accepted—the Premiers of Canada and Newfoundland, of the six Australian colonies and of New Zealand, of the Cape and Natal."

³ The plan was announced in Canada on St. George's Day, April 23rd, some two months before the sixtieth anniversary of the reign on June 20th. Needless

Chamberlain certainly did his utmost to make June 20, 1897, a more critical turning-point in British history than the phlegmatic Duke was perhaps prepared for.

There were other perplexing questions facing the Government besides that of how far it was wise to plan using the approaching Jubilee to draw tighter the "bonds of Empire".¹ A Royal Commission (Majority) Report on Anglo-Irish Financial Relations had lately made its appearance which had united all Ireland, Unionist and Nationalist alike, in demanding tax-remissions on a large scale in view of the "proof" now forthcoming that the United Kingdom taxation system pressed, and had always pressed, Ireland disproportionately hard. The Report was often on questionable fiscal ground though, as Mr. Asquith was prompt to point out, it could not but make a case for the Home Rule which would have allowed Irishmen to choose the taxation system which suited them best. Yet there were Conservative strategists hardy enough to consider using the Report as justification for offering Ireland "compensation", not merely in the shape of an Irish Board of Agriculture and special Exchequer support for the projected Irish County Councils, but even in that of further grants in aid of the "religious education in Ireland" for which the Catholic hierarchy incessantly called. Useful though the Government was finding the good-will of that hierarchy both in Britain and in Ireland—it was relying on it, for example, to give help in the coming Education contests of 1897—Mr. Balfour prudently decided to have the Financial Relations Report further examined before undertaking any dangerous commitments. Some Exchequer support for the

to say, it had Canadian interests mainly in view. The Canadian low-tariff (Liberal) party had come into power under Laurier in 1896 and, in its desire to offer the Canadian consumer some reduction of prices, had turned first to the United States. But in November 1896 the high-tariff Republican candidate McKinley was elected to the Presidency of the United States and Canadian bargaining prospects became poorer. Thereupon it was resolved to offer the Canadian consumer what benefit he could obtain in return for the reduction of Canadian tariffs against British goods by 12½ per cent immediately and 25 per cent ultimately. The hope was held out to the Canadian corn-, meat- and timber-exporting interests, denied easier entry on the United States market, that the new Canadian tariff might serve to win over England to Colonial Preference.

¹ England was soon given an example of the price that had to be paid for the "Imperial policy" adopted by Canada. It transpired that the Canadian tariff proposals violated the German and Belgian Commercial Treaties with Great Britain, made when Great Britain negotiated for the whole Empire and sought no special tariff advantages. In July 1897, therefore, the Belgian and German Commercial Treaties had to be denounced and new arrangements sought in far inferior conditions. Canada, too, paid its price in the long "tariff war" waged by Germany.

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Catholic University of Ireland and, perhaps, even for the further denominationalisation of Irish Elementary Education, could always be arranged when the Catholic Bishops were prepared to bargain "sensibly".¹

It was the "Education Question", however, which, in view of Ministers' sorry experience of 1896, called for the most difficult decisions on their part before they faced Parliament on January 19, 1897. Nor were their decisions made easier by the Voluntary Schools' demand both for Exchequer grant and rate-aid, and the great storm upon both which Radicals and Dissenters tried to blow up.² The Cabinet was probably wise in finally deciding to divide its Education proposals into two—an Elementary Education Bill and a Necessitous Board Schools Bill—each containing disarming modifications and simplifications of the original plans of 1896. The Debate on the Address showed, too, that Ministers had been right in refusing to credit the belief of Rhodes's supporters that the country would permit the full inquiry on the Jameson Raid, that had been promised, to be smothered and forgotten. Rhodes's "heroism" in undertaking personal negotiation with the defeated but still formidable leaders of the Matabele revolt in August, September and October 1896 had undoubtedly produced a certain revulsion in his favour.³ In his favour, too, was the mounting Imperialist excitement, called out by the Jubilee preparations and first manifested, perhaps, in the surprisingly fervid commemoration of Trafalgar Day on October 21, 1896.⁴ But when it was suggested

¹ It is almost impossible to understand the intricacies of the Irish politics of that day without remembering that the National Board, controlling virtually all the grants to public elementary schools, had, so far, despite incessant retreat since its first foundation in 1831, contrived to prevent the complete denominationalisation of the schools and the complete admission of clerical control. Numerous schools of the Christian Brothers had therefore been founded, freer to decorate their class-rooms with devotional pictures and images, and to teach Church, World, and Irish History from Catholic manuals, but they paid a considerable financial penalty in the shape of loss of grant.

² Cf. *British Almanac*, 1898, p. 336: "January (1897)—Preparatory to the Parliamentary session, excited meetings were held all through the month by the two parties upholding religious and secular education respectively. The Government measure, when introduced, proved too moderate for the High Church party while too "clerical" for the secularists. The High Church party, however, eventually rallied to the Bill."

³ Cf. John Proctor, *Boers and Little Englanders*, p. 182. "That Mr. Rhodes is fit to rank with the bravest, his recent conduct testifies, as witness his courageous entry into the Matoppo Hills to pacify a horde of savage Kaffirs, and to stop further bloodshed. And that he is merciful and forgiving, his instructions to Lord Grey to buy up to £50,000 worth of mealies on his responsibility, and distribute them amongst the starving natives, bears silent but eloquent tribute."

⁴ Cf. *British Almanac*, 1898, p. 335: "October . . . on 21st, Trafalgar Day was

in Parliament that the South Africa Select Committee should not be reappointed in the 1897 Session, the suggestion was quickly brushed aside.¹ There might have been a long delay in getting to work, the result of the necessity of waiting, first, for Jameson to be sentenced and, then, for the new Session to begin. But the case for full investigation and against "letting bygones be bygones" was overwhelming, not least because the whole world was watching narrowly.² And Rhodes had not helped himself by undertaking a triumphal tour of Cape Colony, boasting of South Africa's support and criticising the "unctuous rectitude" of his fellow-countrymen.

Having disposed of the Debate on the Address and appointed the South Africa Committee, the Government faced its worst Sessional ordeal when, on February 1st, after a January full of rival public meetings on the "Education Question", Mr. Balfour rose in the Commons to explain the Ministerial plans for the schools.³ He proposed to help the Voluntary Schools by a new annual grant of 5s. per pupil and by assuming for the Exchequer the rate-liability for their buildings. But though there reappeared the fiercely assailed proposal of allowing federations of schools of the same denomination to be formed for grant-earning purposes, it reappeared in a doubly modified form. The School Federations were only to be advisory, submitting schemes for the allocation of the total grant among the federated schools, indeed, but to the Education Department which would keep in its own hands the final decision and the actual handing-over of the money. The plan of entrusting the administration of the new grant to County Education Committees had been abandoned, mainly, it would seem, to lighten the Government's immediate legislative task. But friends of the School Boards, who had complained bitterly in 1896 of the complete neglect of the Boards' claims to representation on the County Education Committees, would now presumably have one grievance the less. Indeed, they might be prepared to

kept with much enthusiasm in London and elsewhere. The Press gave great prominence to our naval armaments and the need of increasing the fleet. . . . December . . . The growing feeling of Imperialism which had shown itself in the remarkable outburst on Trafalgar Day found further and more permanent expression this month in the founding of the British Empire League. . . ."

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, January 29th.

² The world's suspicions were not decreased by what was described as the "popular ovation" accorded to Rhodes when he arrived in England "to face the music" in January 1897. The first meeting of the South Africa Committee took place on February 16th and Rhodes was the first witness summoned.

³ *Ibid*, February 1st.

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admit that even if there were no direct elective element about the Education Department's Inspectorate, its long experience of ecclesiastical stratagems gave a better guarantee against abuse of the new grant by the Voluntary School Federations than would have been obtainable from the County Education Committees of the 1896 model.

Mr. Balfour claimed to have lightened Parliament's task not merely by his modified Voluntary School proposals, but by his plan of putting, what he claimed would be, generous Board School terms into a second Bill to be dealt with later. Though his tactics were probably correct for the House of Commons, the Opposition did not find it difficult to awake plentiful suspicion in the constituencies on many points—the delay, for example, in announcing the detailed help that would be given poorer Board Schools though all the Voluntary Schools, rich and poor, were having their help rushed through at once; the lack of precautions against secret ecclesiastical domination of the Voluntary School Federations; and the absence of provision for the representation of parents, teachers or the local authority in the Boards of Management of Voluntary Schools desiring the new grant.¹ At the “minor General Election” that chanced to be necessary in February, the Government, in fact, lost heavily, for out of four seats contested there were two Opposition gains from Conservatives, each only made possible by a remarkable reversal of the electoral conditions ruling in 1895. Early in March, moreover, Halifax followed Walthamstow and Glasgow Central and gave the Radical Opposition a third gain from the Government despite the intervention of a strong I.L.P. candidate in Tom Mann. It seems that, at this stage, anti-Turkish feeling was also helping the Opposition. Salisbury was blamed for allowing other Powers in the Concert to ban the Greek annexation of Crete, called for by the Christians of the island, and even the protective naval intervention on Crete's behalf attempted by the Greek Fleet in February 1897.²

¹ Cf. *Proceedings of the Second National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches* (March 1897), p. 114, for complaints that the Opposition had been too ready to meet the Government half-way as when Sir Henry Fowler, for example, had said: “We do not want the majority of the representatives of the people; we only want a minority, and we do not want to interfere with the denominational character of the school.”

² Cf. *Ibid.*, for a resolution typifying much British feeling early in 1897: “The National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches records its deep sympathy with the endeavour of the Cretan people to secure emancipation from the Ottoman yoke and with the heroic efforts of their Greek kinsmen in bringing

The Education Question, however, surpassed all others in public interest during the hot party disputes of February and March. Though they made a struggle against all the earlier stages of the Bill, Opposition Radicals, as in 1896, saw their best chances after Second Reading. Before going into Committee, the House of Commons had to dispose of Mr. Lloyd George's instruction that power should be taken to insert clauses in the Bill to provide for adequate representation of local authorities or parents in the management of schools receiving the suggested grant. The instruction was, of course, negatived, but when the Committee stage proper began on March 1st the Bill had to run the gauntlet of a series of searching amendments, all calculated to show its "injustice". One amendment would have limited the proposed grant to "necessitous" Voluntary Schools; another suggested an alteration of nomenclature that would have turned the well-sounding "Voluntary School" into the less pleasing "Sectarian School"; a third would have removed the temptation to found new Voluntary Schools, held out in the grant, by confining the grant to schools already in existence; and a fourth proposed to bar from grant all schools that still charged fees.¹

This part of the discussion was ended when Mr. Balfour successfully applied the "closure" on March 3rd and, by 282 votes against 102, carried a motion that the first ten lines of Clause 1² should stand part of the clause. There was, of course, the usual complaint that Mr. Balfour was burking honest discussion and, indeed, in his hurry to ensure that the Bill should be enacted before the opening of the new financial year, a hurry plainly forced on by financial commitments to the Voluntary Schools, Mr. Balfour had certainly cut down Committee discussion below what was usual in the case of the principal measure of a Parliamentary Session. But proceedings on March 4th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 15th found the Opposition untiring in suggesting new amendments safeguarding the expenditure of the proposed school grants and regulating the constitution of the Voluntary School Associations "in the public interest". When, on March 8th, Mr. Balfour again used the Closure to cut short debate on a string of amendments, aimed at forcing from

them help at a critical time. It regards the possibility of war under these circumstances between Greece and England with horror. . . ."

¹ *Hansard*, March 1st, Lambert, Evans, Griffith and Perks amendments.

² In strict Parliamentary form what was carried was that the words in Clause 1, down to the word "to" in line 10, should stand part of the clause.

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the Government the promise of Education Department Regulations strictly confining grant-expenditure in the Voluntary Schools to securing improved teaching, he exposed himself to new charges of high-handed use of his majority. £620,000 annually, it was claimed, had now been voted away to the Voluntary Schools without expenditure safeguards,¹ and it became all the more necessary to press the Opposition demand for Education Department Regulations prescribing convenient administrative areas, democratic methods, parent, teacher, and local authority representation, and a strong lay element upon the Voluntary School Associations planning the expenditure of the money. When March 16th saw, therefore, another drastic use of the Closure and March 18th the resolve to report without amendment, the Opposition temper becomes understandable which induced even so "responsible" a member of the Front Bench as Mr. Asquith to claim, when opposing the Third Reading on March 25th, that Mr. Balfour had made an oppressive and unconstitutional use of his majority.

Yet once the big Education struggle was over, Ministers could justifiably look forward to less strenuous times for the rest of the Session, even though they were proposing to finance some expansion of permanent military equipment on loan,² to contribute £789,000 in aid of "Egyptian" operations against the Sudan, and to spend £200,000 more per annum on a strengthening of the South Africa garrison, suspect to the Opposition.³ The fact was that, even at the height of the political struggle on Education, the "man in the street" and his increasingly volatile Press had found more sensation in the proceedings of the South Africa Inquiry.

¹ *Proceedings of the Second National Council of the Free Churches*, p. 109, for R. W. Perks, M.P., telling the Council: "But now the sum of £620,000 is going to be given to the denominational schools of the country: and how is it to be distributed? At the sweet will of the Education Department. How is the Department to be guided? They will not inquire into the affairs of 15,000 schools. They would break down under the strain. They have called to their aid 'the Church Federated Associations'. . . . And then will be the scramble for the big Government bribe. . . ."

² Financial purists, of course, grumbled at the raising of a loan for such objects in time of peace. But to find five and a half millions from revenue was difficult without imposing unpopular taxation, and it could be argued that the £1,200,000 for fortifying four coaling-stations; the £2,000,000 for large camps; the £1,150,000 for defensive positions and supplementary arsenals round London; the £500,000 for militia and volunteer ranges; and the £450,000 for the purchase of Salisbury Plain as a manœuvring ground represented capital expenditure properly chargeable upon the next thirty years.

³ Cf. *Hansard*, May 28th, for angry words between Harcourt, who feared Chamberlain was preparing for a war-policy against the Boers, and Chamberlain who accused Harcourt of lack of patriotism.

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Before that was over, new sensations came in the shape of a Turco-Greek War. To the dismay of the Radical Philhellenes, the Greeks proved so inferior to the Turks in courage and military spirit that Ministers, who, unlike their critics, could claim never to have over-idealised the Greeks, obtained some credit for inducing the Concert to enforce the armistice of May 19th on the completely victorious Sultan. By this time the near approach of the great Jubilee festivities was turning "public interest" in another direction, and attention was diverted to Government, Army, Navy and Municipal preparations, to gratifying exhibitions of Colonial attachment to the Queen and the Empire, and even to the extensive speculation proceeding in seats along the Processional Routes. If a general conclusion is attempted on all the functions, ceremonies and processions that lasted from June 19th well into July, it would surely be that there was a good deal more of pomp but a good deal more, also, of Imperialistic vulgarity in 1897 than there had been in 1887. Before all was over, Radicals felt, and even expressed, a certain weariness¹ which it had not needed the protests of discontented Ireland² or starving India³ to evoke.

While the excitements of the Jubilee preparations of 1897 had been rising, the Cabinet, apparently under Mr. Chamberlain's impulsion, had been at pains to demonstrate that, despite Radical attacks on its Education Bill, it was reasonably and sanely "progressive". Thus the Necessitous Board Schools Bill, read a second time on April 26th and a third time on May 20th, both avoided the disturbance of the Cowper-Temple "religious settlement",

¹ Cf. *Northern Echo*, June 22nd: "The preparations have indeed been so long and so elaborate that they have become almost wearisome." It complained also of over-emphasis on the fighting services in the celebrations, saying: "It is to be regretted that more stress has not been laid upon the beneficent process of moral evolution and development which has been wrought during the reign. . . . The country is distinctly and immensely a better and happier place to live in than it was sixty years ago. That is due not only to the fighting forces who have defended us, but to the labour and thought of millions of good men and women, generation by generation, all of whom, save a few of the more distinguished and prominent, are practically unnoted and forgotten. . . ."

² Cf. *Hansard*, July 21st, for Irish resistance to a motion for a congratulatory Address to be presented to the Queen by all members of the Commons in person.

³ The first political assassinations of a modern kind in India took place on June 22nd, when two guests, one a British military officer and the other a British member of the Indian Civil Service, were shot in their carriages when returning from the Governor of Bombay's official Jubilee reception. Famine, plague, earthquake, and, it was alleged, British soldiers' misbehaviour, contributed to the wild riots that broke out in Calcutta on June 30th, and were not finally suppressed until six hundred "rioters" had been killed, even according to the official accounts.

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the mere proposal of which had aroused so much hostility in 1896, and offered the School Boards financial benefits more widely and somewhat more generously than many had expected.¹ And if Opposition members still had a good case both against details of the Bill and its finding of a mere £110,000 for the Board Schools though the Voluntary Schools had had £620,000, they could certainly have none against Mr. Balfour's promise of May 21st to project legislation to give Ireland County Councils and Boards of Guardians on a "popular basis". On May 24th, too, there began the Committee stage of a Workmen's Compensation Bill in which Mr. Chamberlain was known to be particularly interested since it made a Jubilee "benefit" for "Labour" and marked his first prominent step in fulfilling the "social legislation" pledges, so bitterly derided as mere election manœuvres by the Opposition.

For the Workmen's Compensation Bill of 1897 Mr. Chamberlain claimed the special advantage, over Mr. Asquith's of 1894, that it allowed the existing Accident Funds, sponsored by employers and trusted by workmen, to continue to function as "certified schemes". These Funds would now, of course, have to assume the same scale of compensation as that fixed under the Bill—£150 to £300, according to a man's rate of wages, for an accident resulting in death, and, in case of disablement, a weekly allowance not exceeding half his earnings or more than 20s., with a cheap arbitration procedure in case of dispute. But the Opposition, claiming that all the good points of the Bill were Mr. Asquith's, and all the bad ones the Government's own, did not have much difficulty in displaying to "Labour" how far short of perfection the scheme fell. On May 24th one rejected Opposition amendment would have given compensation for shattered health as well as accidents, and a second would have extended the operation of the Bill to cover the excluded farm labourers, seamen, and employees in workshops

¹ Cf. *Proceedings of the Second National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches*, p. 113, for a hostile prophecy that was, in fact, belied: "We shall get another Bill for the School Board, they say. I venture to predict, that it will be a condition under the next Bill, that no aid will be given to the School Boards of the country, unless we shall consent to accept interference with their liberties and progress, which we never can conscientiously accept. In a few months we may find ourselves face to face with this alternative, that we must either accept reactionary modifications of the School Board system, or do without the grant. There is to be not a penny for Leeds, Birmingham, Nottingham, and Bristol to do the great work of School-board Education. . . ." Actually all the four School Boards here indicated and, indeed, every one of the larger School Boards except that of London was to receive a measure of financial aid.

not using machinery.¹ On May 26th Mr. Chamberlain himself helped the Opposition when he agreed to reassure employers, worried by the large sweep, copied from Mr. Asquith, that was originally to have been made of the injustices that had become attached to legal notions of "Contributory Negligence". By introducing a new clause excluding from compensation workmen to whose serious and wilful misconduct an accident was solely due, Mr. Chamberlain, in fact, opened one of the doors to the legal wrangling that eventually went so far to nullify the "benefits" of the 1897 Bill.²

On the Report Stage, after Mr. Asquith had begun with a significant amendment to omit the word "personal" from the description of compensable injuries, the Government's own supporters began to add to Mr. Chamberlain's troubles. One amendment was carried under which no compensation was awardable if a workman had voluntarily quitted an employer's service without giving him notice of an alleged injury, and a second was accepted that reduced the period in which a compensation claim could be made from twelve months to six. An attempt was even made to cut out the Government's own proposals for making the employer liable when a "certified" Accident Fund proved, in fact, insufficient to meet the claims made upon it. And if this was temporarily defeated, an Opposition amendment to give an injured workman a preferential claim on an employer's assets in the event of bankruptcy was rejected though the proposal had a real value in promising to increase the commercial pressure, brought to bear on smaller employers, to take out a sufficient Accident Insurance.³ More complaisance was shown to the Government's

¹ *Hansard*, May 24th, Tennant and Nussey amendments. In regard to shattered health it was pointed out that even the women who suffered the agonies and death of lead-poisoning in the paint and pottery trades—and it might be from plain neglect of necessary precautions by the employer—had no benefit from the Bill, while on the subject of excluded trades, Mr. Asquith, on Second Reading, had estimated them to contain (with domestic service) sixty per cent of the working classes.

² Cf. S. H. Jeyes, *Mr. Chamberlain*, pp. 406-7, for an ingenuous admission: "In one respect the working of the Act has somewhat disappointed its authors. The contentious disposition of some employers on the one hand, and of certain Trade Union leaders on the other, assisted by the perversely conscientious ingenuity of the lawyers, has subsequently thrown an element of doubt and obscurity over an Act which to the lay mind had been perfectly clear and consistent. It has, therefore, given rise to a certain amount of expensive litigation."

³ For long there existed in Industry no more pathetic class than the victims of a considerable industrial accident, whose compensation claims induced an uncovered employer to go into liquidation.

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supporters when the Bill was altered and a workman claiming compensation was required, when asked to do so, to submit himself for medical examination on his employer's behalf. It must have been a special mortification to Mr. Chamberlain, after all this, that the great coal-owner, Lord Londonderry, should have insisted with a band of friends in the Lords on further amendments certain to help the Opposition in its inevitable disparagement of the Bill. For Lord Londonderry, for example, to insist on forcing into the Bill a provision freeing the employer, operating a "certified scheme" from further liability, even when the "certified" scheme proved, in fact, insufficient to meet the claims upon it, was to provide the Opposition with just the telling example it needed to decry the Bill.¹

Ministers had, perhaps, less trouble with another "benefit to Labour" that they offered in their Foreign Prison-Made Goods Bill. Many sections of "Labour", and especially the poorest, had long been complaining that "pauper aliens"—often Jewish refugees from Tsarist persecution in Poland and Russia—were "taking the bread out of their mouths".² Government supporters had sometimes been tempted by the opportunity which an Aliens Bill might have offered them of driving a wedge between "Labour" and a Radical Opposition traditionally committed to oppose any restriction of the right of asylum. But if the desire not to create a precedent, usable against the great stream of British emigrants to the United States, had so far prevented restrictive Aliens legislation that might have been a political asset, there seemed no reason why action should not be taken to prohibit the dumping on the British market from abroad, of prison-made goods offered at prices alleged to be below the cost of production.³ For all the

¹ Cf. J. P. Alderson, *Mr. Asquith*, p. 170: "The House of Lords proposed a number of amendments, some of which were keenly contested by the Opposition in the Commons. The proposal to strike out sub-section 4, which made it incumbent upon the employer to meet any deficiency in the payment of compensation, brought a spirited speech from Mr. Asquith. He criticised the inconsistency and weakness of the Government in giving way to the Upper House, and urged that workmen should not be deprived of the full benefit the clause would give them. Some smart passages at arms occurred between Mr. Asquith and Mr. Chamberlain. . . ."

² Cf. R. H. Sherard's once well-known *The White Slaves of England*, a series contributed to *Pearson's Magazine* in 1897 and extensively reproduced in book-form (Fourth Ed., 1904), for the article on the "Slipper-Makers and Tailors of Leeds" and their complaints. Similar grumbling had long been rampant in the tailoring, furniture, and boot trades of the metropolis.

³ Cf. Arnold White, *English Democracy, Its Promises and Perils*, pp. 221-2, for one of the sensational "publicists" of the time, writing in 1894, on, "the

somewhat exaggerated complaints of "Labour", the actual quantity of such goods appearing in the British market must have been negligible. The Bill, however, certainly provided Ministers with a valuable opportunity of "protecting the British working classes" from the Opposition devotees of Free Trade who feared the admission of the protective principle so much that they divided, first, to confine the Bill's operation to goods made *entirely* in foreign prisons and, then, to make it applicable only to goods sold below the current market price.¹

Strategically significant in the party struggle as were the topics instanced above, the end-of-the-Session subject, most absorbing alike to contemporaries and to posterity, was the South Africa (Majority) Report and the Parliamentary debate of July 26th that ensued thereon. There are still some mysteries about the South Africa Committee, and especially that of the real reason why the Colonial Office and Mr. Chamberlain were handled so tenderly. Even Mr. Labouchere's Minority Report of one held that the complicity of the Colonial Office had not in any way been proved, and limited itself to the awkward revelation that, in the author's view, the Committee had never showed the slightest disposition to probe the question. As to the Majority Report, signed by the representatives of both Front Benches, including Harcourt and Campbell-Bannerman for the Opposition, it whitewashed the Colonial Office strenuously when reporting that "neither the Secretary of State for the Colonies nor any of the officials of the Colonial Office received any information which had made them, or should have made them, aware of the plot during its development". Of course even Rhodes, sharp as was the Majority Report towards him, his associates and his methods, had had two almost open protectors in the Committee in the persons of the Conservative members, Bigham and Wyndham.² And as for Chamberlain, it had not only

manufacture of the unemployable" and prepared to question, among other things, whether Britain did not lose heavily from the emigration to America: "An examination into the real character of imports and exports, both of people and goods, would dispel a vast amount of misconception in the public mind. It is alleged on good authority that the emigrants from this country are its bone and sinew; that the immigrants from Eastern Europe are generally paupers; that the foreign Jewish poor are growing at an alarming rate; that the prison-made goods of Germany come in under free trade. . . . On these things we want more light. Let there be light. . . ."

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, July 13th, Lough and Haldane amendments.

² Cf. S. H. Jeyes, *Mr. Chamberlain*, p. 771, for three of the "missing telegrams" of the South Africa Inquiry which Hawksley, Rhodes's solicitor,

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been impossible to suggest his exclusion from the Committee without condemning him in advance, but he had used the membership to good effect. He had seized the strategic moment to go into the witness-box to deny damaging allegations against himself¹ and he had known how to ascribe certain otherwise incriminating facts to the deafness of Fairfield, the high Colonial Office official who had died before he could be examined.²

But for Harcourt and Campbell-Bannerman to have denied themselves the important party advantages which the Committee might have yielded them is almost clear proof that certain outside influences were at work. Conjecture has played with the notion of an indirect Palace appeal to them not to spoil the Jubilee;³ and even if this is dismissed, a time of international tension and of grave Uitlander troubles, between the Colonial Office and the Transvaal, might well have seemed an improper one for a first-class scandal. For a space it even seemed that, with the connivance of Harcourt, a debate on the South Africa Committee's extraordinary history might be avoided. But after one indignant Unionist had prevented a smuggle-through of the Colonial Estimates, and a Radical band of "Liberal Forwards" had, against every official type of discouragement and discourtesy, organised to make trouble, a debating opportunity had to be allowed on July 26th. But even the "Liberal

refused to produce and whose surrender, Blake, the Irish Nationalist representative on the Committee, and Labouchere, tried to force. Blake conveniently found his excuse for retiring from the Committee when its majority declined to exhaust all the means at its command against Hawksley. Otherwise the public might have found that Hawksley himself played a part in the nomination of the Conservative side of the Committee, and even in the definition of the Committee's terms of reference.

¹ The allegations of Dr. Rutherford Harris who had conducted for Rhodes and the South Africa Company the negotiations for the transfer of the Bechuanaland strip, ostensibly needed for railway development, but actually used as the jumping-off point for the Raid. Chamberlain denied that he had understood the hints Harris claimed to have given him of his true purposes, and asserted that he had stopped Harris when he had attempted to make "confidential communications" outside official routine.

² When Chamberlain went into the witness-box, towards the end of the Inquiry, to answer questions on the Colonial Office, he admitted that Harris might have spoken to Fairfield of some of his purposes without realising that Fairfield was very deaf and liable to misapprehend what was said to him. W. S. Blunt's *My Diaries, 1888-1914*, has under June 3rd: "The South African Committee is virtually, not virtuously, over, and no one in his senses can doubt that Chamberlain was privy to the raid, not, indeed, at the last moment, but in its initial stages."

³ Cf. W. S. Blunt, *op. cit.*, under July 15th, for an extreme view: "The Queen is at the bottom of half the Imperialistic mischief we do abroad. She is pleased at her title of Empress, and likes to enlarge her borders."

Forwards" were too intimidated to make trouble effectively,¹ and when Chamberlain, in reply, took upon himself to justify the retention of Rhodes's name on the list of Privy Councillors with a eulogy that brought at least one protesting Conservative to his feet, the protester was howled down and the "Liberal Forward" motion defeated by 304 votes against 77 in a Division in which only the abstentions were significant. That normally stiff Radical organs should have maintained an embarrassed coolness towards the "Liberal Forwards" and sighed with relief when the whole business was over,² only adds to the strangeness of a situation that further strengthened Chamberlain's Colonial hand during the Recess. Transvaal efforts to deny British suzerainty, and French efforts to snatch at what Chamberlain regarded as outlying parts of British Nigeria were now more likely to lead to crises than Salisbury at the Foreign Office altogether liked,³ and so, as the event proved, were the French ambitions to expand their Equatorial Africa holdings by sending Major Marchand through Bahr-el-Ghazal to Fashoda. Britain already asserted in advance the right to exclude other Powers from the vast territories in Central Africa once claimed for the Egyptain Sudan and now, it was held, in process of reconquest by Kitchener's "Anglo-Egyptian" forces.

¹ Cf. W. S. Blunt's *My Diaries, 1888-1914*, for one view behind the scenes. Under 27th July, Blunt writes: "To London and lunched with George (Wyndham), whom I found triumphant over the issue of the debate on South Africa last night. He considers the triumph of the Rhodes group, which is his own triumph, due to superior ability in the Parliamentary management, the capture of old Harcourt, the forcing of Chamberlain's hand into open support of Rhodes and the bamboozling of stupid M.P.s. With regard to Chamberlain, George admires him as the grandest specimen of the courageous, unscrupulous schemer our politics have ever seen. . . . He described Chamberlain's speech and the menace he (Chamberlain) threw out to Dilke if anyone should dare propose the cancelling of Rhodes's position in the Privy Council. Chamberlain did not name Dilke, but his eye, while speaking, travelled along the benches of the Opposition, so that it was clear to all what his meaning was. It was a base threat, and he would certainly have followed it up if the Radicals had dared accept his challenge. George triumphs in all this, but to me it is pitiful to see a young man like him, the heir of all the ages, connecting himself with such a scoundrel crew."

² Cf. *Northern Echo*, the Radical morning halfpenny of the north-east of England. One suggestive conjecture made in Halévy's *History of the English People, Epilogue 1895-1905* (Pelican ed., i, 58 n.) is that the Liberal Government of 1894 had, in its day, received, without protest, information of a plan to help Uitlanders from Bechuanaland.

³ Cf. Garvin's *Chamberlain*, iii, 208: "Troubled chiefly by the Prime Minister's doubts about a good deal of the British case, Chamberlain held it in the main to be sound and that it ought to be supported 'even at the cost of war'."

CHAPTER XV

IMPERIALISM GAINS GROUND, 1898

"The Liberal party have plenty of representative assemblies, but it has only one which can pretend to any kind of general authority. That is the National Liberal Federation. They met at Derby the other day, and they held a general discussion. After considering replies which they had received from, I think they said, 800 branches throughout the kingdom, they have determined their policy; and what is their policy? It was the Newcastle programme with a few items added. Among these items was women's suffrage. But they agreed that the Newcastle programme, important as it was, must still be postponed. As a preliminary, a preface, they decided that the two foremost and most important objects of Liberal policy were, first, a complete reform of the electoral system . . . and in the second place, the abolition of the veto of the House of Lords. These are the gentlemen who are appealing for your suffrages and who desire to be permitted . . . to govern you, and this is their policy—as a *hors d'œuvre*, the commencement of the dinner, something to give you an appetite, these two great reforms and after that the Newcastle programme. (Laughter.) Now take these two reforms. Electoral reform of the House of Commons, according to the resolution which these gentlemen passed, consists of eleven separate constitutional changes of the most revolutionary kind. They include an amendment of the Ballot Act, an amendment of the Corrupt Practices Act, one man, one vote, the payment of election expenses, the payment of members, universal manhood and universal female suffrage. That is the first. That is the preliminary. When do you think they will get to business? (Laughter.) I doubt very much whether it would be constitutional or even possible to treat these subjects separately; yet I believe that every one of them would require a separate Bill, and I will undertake to say that if these Bills are to be brought in and carried upon these points you may look for twelve years of agitation and a dozen dissolutions of Parliament. . . ."

Chamberlain derides the Opposition's programme, January 29, 1898.

"15th Oct. (1898). All this week has been one of excitement over the quarrel with France about Fashoda. A Blue Book has been published giving the English case, and, imperial plunder being in question, all parties, Tories, Whig, Radical,

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Churchmen and Nonconformist, have joined in publicly extolling English virtue and denouncing the French. . . . Yesterday, there was a great public meeting in favour of universal peace, and our leading Nonconformists on the platform applauded Lord Salisbury for having thus swindled Egypt and defied France. We live in an odd age."

From W. S. BLUNT'S *My Diaries, 1888-1914*.

WHEN, after the Jubilee excitement of the summer of 1897, Parliament was prorogued on August 6th, it is not to be wondered at if strictly political activity declined, for a space, almost to nothing. The nation had been surfeited with spectacle and oratory of the florid and ultimately fatiguing kind associated with Imperial celebrations, and if all Chamberlain's wooing of the Colonial Premiers had failed to produce any perceptible advance towards the more organic Imperial union he desired,¹ that only reduced the political activity of a Recess that might otherwise have been disturbed by Radical protests. Advancing "prosperity" also made for more holiday-taking and less politics during the summer and autumn. To judge from the "substantial gains" in the Revenue and Bankers' Clearing House Returns, the steady expansion of the railway traffics "from week to week and month to month", and the cheerful employment situation pictured in the monthly statistics of the Board of Trade's Labour Department, 1897 surpassed 1896, itself a year of remarkable recuperation, in all the normal marks of "prosperity" except company-promoting.² And that company-promoting was at a discount, after the "Kaffir" collapse of 1895 and the Westralian collapse of 1896, probably did "prosperity" more good than harm. Trade was allowed to "advance" in a steady fashion, along proven lines, and the "confidence" was maintained necessary to make "prosperity" last.

Such a season as the auspicious summer of 1897 was just the time to tempt strongly organised and ambitious sections of "Labour" to force on "industrial and social progress", and July 1897 did, in fact, see the beginning of a great strike by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers for the "Eight Hours Day". This

¹ Cf. Garvin's *Chamberlain*, iii, 186-95, for a treatment, based on the full shorthand notes of the five sittings of the Colonial Conference of 1897. Substantially Garvin admits that "the failure to effect any kind of immediate closer union, even for maritime defence, seemed disappointing and even ironical by comparison with the outward grandeurs of the Jubilee celebrations". The "public" was not, of course, informed of the Cabinet's disappointment.

² Cf. *British Almanac*, 1898, p. 332: "As regards the course of business in the Stock Exchange, the volume of investment and speculative transactions was, on the whole, held in restraint by the unsettled condition of political affairs, while the effect of the collapse of the 'boom' in South African gold shares in 1895 was still felt. . . . The important discovery of auriferous deposits in the Klondyke fields caused a lot of excitement in the newspapers, and among the promoting fraternity; but all the efforts made by the latter to lure investors failed. They were still smarting from the disappointment and losses . . . in Westralian mines. . . ."

offensive struggle by a prosperous union, whose "ruinous" restrictions on personnel, methods, management and output, the employers blamed for the relative decline of British engineering as against American,¹ hardly forced its way into politics save near its collapse early in 1898.² Very different was the case of the Eastern Question which was strenuously agitated once more when political oratory recommenced in the autumn. If it was true, as Conservatives claimed, that Britain's action in the Concert had served to moderate the victorious Sultan's terms to Greece, it was also true that Greece had been forced to accept "boundary rectification" and a crippling indemnity, while the Sultan had been strengthened in his determination to surrender none of his effective power over decimated Armenia and a Crete in dread.

Another valuable theme for Opposition oratory, as was proved by the November gain of a Lancashire seat at Middleton, was the heavy and expensive campaign proceeding on the North-West Frontier of plague- and famine-stricken India. It was to the Opposition's special advantage that the whole of the costly and not altogether successful operations which had been dragging on since June 1897 could be ascribed to a flashy Imperialist reversal of the Rosebery Government's Frontier policy.³ In June 1895, after succession troubles in the Chitral had been suppressed in small and very efficiently conducted operations, the Rosebery Government had determined to withdraw the operating forces and trust to its

¹ Cf. The Webbs' *History of Trade Unionism*, ed. 1902, Introduction, p. xix, for the admission that "the workmen had put themselves fatally wrong with public opinion by not recognising the need for maximising productivity, and by not proposing their own way of attaining this end".

² And then in the dubious form of punishing a Liberal employer who was trying to prevent Lord Charles Beresford, a Tory candidate with a policy of indefinite naval expansion, from capturing a York seat. Cf. *Northern Echo*, January 10, 1898: "It is to be hoped that the common sense of the constituency will not be influenced by the unworthy tactics that are being employed to damage Sir Christopher Furness's candidature at York. It is playing very low indeed to make party capital out of the engineering dispute. . . . Mr. John Burns's manifesto against the Liberal candidate is most unwarrantable. . . . Sir Christopher Furness's attitude . . . has always been conciliatory, and he is known as a most considerate employer. . . ."

³ Cf. *Lord Rosebery's Speeches, 1874-1896*, p. 338, for a part of a speech given on July 5, 1895, that made the Opposition's position stronger: "The late Government never had an opportunity of announcing the unanimous conclusion at which they had arrived with respect to Chitral. They had instructed the Governor-General of India that, at the earliest possible moment, consistently with safety and with dignity, they should withdraw from Chitral. I have no time now to give the reasons for this decision: but if the new Government think of reversing it I trust they will mete out to us the measure they asked us to mete out to them, and will give us an opportunity of discussing their policy before they finally adopt it."

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old indirect means of control. The Conservative Government had, however, reversed the policy and undertaken to station considerable forces in a wild area and among untamed inhabitants with the result, it was claimed, that the tribesmen feared that some military road-building might portend their complete and lasting enslavement. A serious armed clash had followed on June 10, 1897. As the tribesmen had scored an initial success, the trouble rapidly spread, and it was stimulated by rumours, reaching the tribal mullahs, to the effect that, even in Europe, the Muslim Sultan was once more defeating the Christians. When Baluchis in the far south were conspiring, and Waziris, Afridis, Mohmands, Orakzais and Swatis were actively in arms along hundreds of miles of difficult frontier, British India faced its sternest military test for a generation.¹ And if costly and difficult operations were held, by the end of 1897, to have read the tribesmen a terrible lesson, the British-Indian forces themselves had suffered heavily.

By-election losses at home and taxing Frontier troubles in India hardly strengthened the British hand in the still unresolved Nigeria disputes with France or in the Chinese difficulties just provoked by the German occupation of Kiao-Chow and the Russian occupation of Port Arthur.² That is, perhaps, why when another "miniature General Election" was being held in January 1898, Chamberlain resolved to use the opportunity, given him by some speaking engagements in Liverpool, to make a strong demonstration on behalf of a Government that he felt, with justice, would certainly win another General Election, if it were to be held,³

¹ The more so as plague and famine had raised anti-British feeling in India to dangerous heights. Cf. *British Almanac*, 1898, pp. 283-4, for a short summary of the situation: "The famine was followed by bubonic plague, which made great ravages in Bombay, Karachi, and other large towns in the early part of 1897; great distress was also caused in Calcutta and in Assam by an earthquake in June. In Poona and Calcutta serious riots occurred in the summer ostensibly on account of alleged misconduct by British soldiers when engaged in efforts to suppress the plague. Subsequently disturbances spread throughout the north-west frontier. . . . The outposts at Fort Maude, Ali Musjid and Lundi Khotal had to be abandoned. . . ."

² Cf. *The Times*, December 1st, for the Kaiser's references to the Kiao-Chow occupation in a speech from the Throne to the Reichstag, asking ominously for a new Navy Bill. There was some fear of a Russo-German Concert against Britain on the "China Question".

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, January 20th: "The political campaign has opened in earnest, if that is the proper phrase to use, when the Opposition, disorganised and disunited, can see no ground on which to attack the Government with any prospect of success. The air, however, has already become thick with platform speeches." It is unnecessary to add that *The Times*, friendly to the Government, made out the plight of the Opposition to be worse than it was.

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though voters were allowing it to be defeated on side-issues at by-elections. Addressing the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce on January 18, 1898, the Colonial Secretary, precluded, of course, from making a directly party oration, spoke on Trade and the Empire in his most challenging tones:¹

"Our ancestors," he said, "made great sacrifices to contest the possession with other powers of the West Indies, of Canada, of India, of the Cape, and it is in consequence of that that we are now the great nation that we boast ourselves to be. (Cheers.) If now our population exists in a state of comfort, which is, at any rate, comparatively greater than that of any other Continental nation, it is precisely because of the foresight and self-denial of those who preceded us. (Hear, hear.) What they did for us we have to do for our successors—we who have double the population, we who have tenfold the resources—if we are not willing that this country should sink into a fifth-rate power and the British Empire should be dissolved into its component atoms. (Cheers.) I hope I am not going to be misunderstood. It is not a policy of aggression or of lawlessness which I am recommending to you. I hold that we have a threefold duty. In the first place, to keep what rightly belongs to us. (Cheers.) In the second place, if I may use a very admirable phrase of Lord Rosebery's to 'peg out claims for posterity' (Hear hear); and, in the third place, if anyone tries to 'rush' those claims, gently to prevent them. (Laughter and long-continued cheers.)"

This able, if provocative, platform stimulation was succeeded by an invitation to a country, surrounded, despite its alleged moderation, by envious neighbours, to reflect on the advantages of "closer union with the colonies":

"Now I say," declared the Colonial Secretary, "that there is no nation that during the last twenty years has made such sacrifices to preserve cordial relations with its neighbours as Great Britain. We alone, without compulsion, not under the pressure of defeat, but voluntarily and of our own motion, have again and again surrendered territory that was in our full possession, and have called back the pioneer of our flag and civilisation. . . . We have deferred to the sensibilities of our Allies. We have shown a conciliatory temper in face of much provocation (Hear, hear) and what is the result. We are told that we are to-day the best-hated nation in Europe. The foreign Press . . . is continually gloating over our early downfall, and is calling for a coalition of influences in order to bring it about. . . . We know that it proceeds largely from envy at our success but it constitutes a warning to every Englishman which we cannot ignore—that is, if we are to maintain

¹ *The Times*, January 19th.

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our own, as we intend to do (Cheers), we must rely on our own strength, on our own preparations, and not on the favour of those whom we have vainly sought to make friends. (Cheers.)

“There is another duty which, I think, is incumbent upon the British Government, and that is to draw closer to our colonies (Cheers), to the sister nations of our own race across the seas (Cheers), and to seek in our own family the strength and support we shall never find from foreign nations. (Cheers.)”

If the speech of January 18th was a most able platform performance, its ultimate wisdom was all the more questionable because of the ample doses of self-laudation which Britons had already been taking during Jubilee year. In the speech Chamberlain delivered on January 19th to the Liverpool Constitutional Association, the same astonishing virtuosity of popular platform performance was directed against his domestic opponents.¹ The National Liberal Federation's programme-making was derided;² the Liberal Government of 1892-5 was treated as a national disaster; and a defence of Ministers' questionable Turkish, Chitral and Sudan policies was introduced by an extraordinarily misleading account of the faults of their predecessors. The Armenian massacres might apparently have been stopped if Rosebery's Government had acted more firmly right at the beginning;³ the policy of “scuttle” from Chitral would possibly have brought greater troubles than those of 1897;⁴ and, as for the operations in

¹ *The Times*, January 20th: “Has the Home Rule party ceased to be a Home Rule party? (No.) Have the little Englanders become patriotic? (No.) Have the authors of the Newcastle Programme—the most extraordinary political mixture which was ever invented, which owes its reputation to the fact that everybody, every section of the party, agreed to swallow the mixture upon the condition that each was allowed to put his own ingredients into the mess—(Loud cheers) have the authors of this programme returned to the ways of soberness and reason? (Cheers). . . .”

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*: “And at the very outset of those disturbances in Armenia, and at the time when possibly a firm remonstrance and a firm standing might have prevented a good deal of what subsequently happened, we know very well that they were doing nothing.”

⁴ *Ibid.*: “A retirement from Chitral immediately after a wanton attack had been made on that place by the tribes in the neighbourhood and had been repelled by the exhibition of great force—to have retired from Chitral at such a moment, it seems to me, would certainly have led to greater dangers than any of those with which we are now confronted (Cheers). Would it not have been to suggest to all those fierce and semi-barbarous peoples, who know no argument except the argument of force, that they have only got to put sufficient pressure upon the British Government and that they would then scuttle. A more dangerous doctrine I cannot conceive to be taught in the case of our great dependency of India (Hear, hear). . . .”

the Sudan and other parts of Africa, they had "saved millions of lives and allowed millions of people to enjoy comparative prosperity".

But Chamberlain's hardest hitting and most serious misrepresentation came when he recited the domestic reasons why voters at the "miniature General Election" of January and February 1898 should support the Government:¹

"As regards . . . our home policy," he said, "independent altogether of its intrinsic merits, I defend it to you, to our supporters throughout the country, by saying that it is the strict fulfilment of the pledges which we made. . . . It does not please our opponents. It did not please them when we first promulgated it. It was not constructed to please them. (Hear, hear.) It is based on lines which are altogether different from those which they follow. They wanted to destroy the voluntary schools, we wanted to save them (Loud cheers), and we have saved them. (Renewed cheers.) They ridiculed the depression of agriculture. We thought it was rather a serious matter of concern that the greatest of all our industries should have become unprofitable, and we promised to do what in us lay to find first some relief, and we have relieved it. (Hear, hear.) They declared that it was impossible and if it were possible, it was undesirable, to save from ruin certain industries which were menaced, to keep employment for a small number of workpeople who were threatened with loss of it from the competition of German and other Continental convicts. We thought it was just and practicable to do it, and we have done it. (Cheers.) And lastly, they laughed [*sic!*] at the suggestion that when workpeople and their families suffered by accidents which were incurred without fault of their own in connection with some of the industries of the country, it was right and proper that they should have some claim upon those industries, and that their lives and safety should be insured as much as the machinery and buildings in which the industry was carried on. (Cheers.) They laughed at the suggestion, we have given effect to the principle, and I believe we have thereby conferred upon the working classes of this country the greatest boon they have ever received since the time the last Conservative Government gave them free education. . . ."

If Mr. Chamberlain intended by these slashing methods to show how the by-election rot might be stopped that was weakening Ministers' prestige as the "strongest Government of modern times" he certainly succeeded. The net result of the "miniature General Election" of January and February 1898, involving though it did no fewer than nine constituencies, was to leave the party

¹ *The Times*, January 20th.

position in the Commons as it was. The Opposition had, indeed, somewhat improved its voting strength as compared with 1895 but as the Government actually won a seat to balance an Opposition gain, Ministers could open the 1898 Session on February 8th, much more cheerfully than had once seemed likely.¹ Moreover throughout the 122 days of business that marked a Session, ended by prorogation on August 12th, continuous excitements on foreign affairs were to give the Government ever-increasing advantages. Even the serious internal strains in France on the Dreyfus case, in Italy on Crispi's entanglement in bank scandals, and in Austria on the never-ending nationality disputes, helped those who asked Englishmen to thank God that they had given themselves a strong Government in 1895. But to read the newspapers of the day is to become convinced of the increasing attraction of the fast-moving "world politics" of the day for voters who, in the whirl of a Sokoto (Nigeria) crisis with France in February, a Wei-hai-Wei *riposte* to Russia in April and an exciting summer of Sudanese and Spanish-American War, were apt to lose the old thrill from all-night sittings on Irish Local Government² or obstinate Lords-Commons disputes on the insertion of a "conscientious objection" clause in a Vaccination Bill.³ When even Radical newspapers began, in March, to indulge their readers with fascinating speculations on how a tripartite understanding between Britain, Germany and America might check Russia in China, France in Equatorial Africa and Spain in "oppressed" and rebellious Cuba, the comparative importance of the most thorny domestic issues was likely to shrink.⁴

¹ Cf. *Northern Echo*, February 7, 1898, for a leader on the "Meeting of Parliament", whose attempts to show cheerfulness about the latest batch of by-election returns hardly carry conviction. Dealing with the Government's gain of York and retention of Wolverhampton it said: "It is noteworthy that in the two contests . . . the Government has owed its triumph more to the personality of its nominees than to considerations of a political nature. It was only by his strongly attractive personality that Lord Charles Beresford managed to capture York by less than a dozen votes. . . . At Wolverhampton, too, the Government had the advantage in having for a candidate a sort of political "Man of Ross" who by judicious benefactions had been assiduously preparing for the eventuality of last week. . . ."

² Cf. *Hansard*, July 14th, for the all-night proceedings necessary to complete the Report Stage of the Irish Local Government Bill after long efforts on July 6th, 7th, and 11th.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, July 20th, for the concession of the clause at a late stage in the Commons. On August 4th the Lords struck it out; on August 5th the Commons insisted on its replacement; and on August 10th a majority in the Lords was persuaded to give way.

⁴ Cf. *Daily Chronicle*, March 8th, March 14th, etc.

Of course, with the Parnellite Irish group under Redmond forcing the pace, "Irish Distress" may still be found occupying many columns of *Hansard*.¹ Considerable displays, too, were made against the precautions Ministers had taken in their Irish Local Government Bill to prevent elective District and County Councils and democratised Boards of Guardians from stretching or abusing powers, that could, in any case, be pictured as more circumscribed than those of parallel bodies in privileged Britain. In fact, introduced and explained though the Bill was on February 21st, an all-night sitting was still necessary, so late as July 14th, to finish the Report Stage. Before the prorogation of August 12th, moreover, there had been the usual delicate work of persuading the Lords not to press for precautions on behalf of landlords, rate-payers and Protestants greater than those that had seemed sufficient to Ministers and the Conservative majority in the Commons. Other domestic issues were possessed of sufficient vitality to force themselves into the forefront of discussion despite the constant excitement about foreign affairs. An old Dissenting grievance was met when Nonconformist Ministers, like the Anglican clergy, were allowed to celebrate marriages without the presence of the Registrar. Then, Conservative hostility to the "Progressive" semi-Socialists of the London County Council took the strange form of attempting to win from the County Council elections of March 1898 a verdict for the abolition of the Council in favour of a number of smaller and more manageable municipalities with less expansive notions on municipal enterprise or the proper standards of pay for municipal employees. A Welsh Land Tenure Bill, again, gave proof of another continuing Radical activity, and it was in Wales, too, that "Labour's" most conspicuous effort was undertaken in a coal strike that stopped a number of related industries, not to mention the year's Naval Manœuvres.

It was the international situation, however, which was uppermost in men's minds in the spring and summer of 1898. Even the cautious Salisbury could, on May 4th, employ most unusual language to a Primrose League meeting, language intended to soothe those beginning to fear England's alleged "dangerous

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, February 9th and 10th, for the opening demonstration, taking the form of an amendment to the Address, eventually rejected, after Ministers had promised action. The Division figures of 235-153, like others on the Irish Local Government Bill, show that a measure of co-operation still continued between British Radicals and the Irish.

isolation" as instanced, it was believed, in the understanding of the previous winter between Russia, Germany and France to snatch at Chinese holdings regardless of Britain. Though Salisbury asked his hearers not to fear for territory under British control, he talked a bastard Darwinism of "living" and of "dying nations" that was profoundly disturbing not merely to China and Turkey, Spain and Portugal but even to Italy and France. Here is the most canvassed part of the Prime Minister's language:¹

We know that we shall maintain against all comers that which we possess, and we know, in spite of the jargon about isolation, that we are amply competent to do so. But that will not secure the peace of the world. You may roughly divide the nations of the world as the living and the dying . . . the weak states are becoming weaker and the strong states are becoming stronger . . . the living nations will gradually encroach on the territory of the dying, and the seeds and causes of conflict amongst civilised nations will speedily appear.

The shock inflicted by Salisbury's language seems to have been the greater from the fact that the Continent had been looking to him to keep Chamberlain's Imperialism in check. Yet language such as Salisbury's hardly discountenanced Chamberlain's rumoured readiness, in the event of French intransigence on Nigeria, to force on a naval war in which every troublesome colonial difficulty that France had made for generations would be ended for good—the "French shore" that plagued Newfoundland, New Caledonia that exasperated Australia, the pin-pricking in Egypt and West Africa, and the French claim-jumping in Madagascar and Siam.

On May 13th, in the Birmingham Town Hall, Chamberlain made his own contribution to the debate.² Attacking almost openly the Russian record in China, he virtually invited his country to consider the advantages of detaching Germany from co-operation with the Russo-French allies in the Far East by the proffer of an Anglo-German Alliance. And taking advantage of the European Continent's half-threatening attitude towards the United States on the Spanish-American War, Chamberlain offered Washington an understanding that might, if desired, become something more:

" . . . since the Crimean War, nearly fifty years ago," Chamberlain declared, "the policy of this country has been a policy of strict isolation.

¹ *The Times*, May 5th.

² *Ibid.*, May 14th.

We have had no allies. I am afraid we have had no friends . . . we are liable to be confronted at any moment with a combination of Great Powers. . . . We stand alone. . . .

"As to the representations that were made (by Russia) and repudiated as soon as they were made, as to the promises which were given and broken a fortnight later, I had better perhaps say nothing—except that I have always thought it was a very true proverb, 'Who sups with the devil must have a very long spoon' . . .

"If the policy of isolation . . . is to be maintained in the future then the fate of the Chinese Empire may be, and probably will be, hereafter decided without reference to our wishes and in defiance of our interests. And if, on the other hand, we are determined to enforce the policy of the open door, to preserve an equal opportunity for trade with all our rivals, then we must not allow our Jingos to drive us into quarrel with all the world at the same time, and we must not reject the idea of an alliance with those Powers whose interests are most nearly approximate to our own."

After such speeches it was inevitable that, when the Foreign Office Vote came to be debated on June 10th, insistent efforts were made by the Opposition to condemn Chamberlain's irruption into the field of foreign affairs with a policy of "touting for allies", irreconcilable with the avowed policy of the Prime Minister at the Foreign Office and threatening to drag Britain into every continental war. But why Chamberlain needed not to fear the worst that either Front or Back Bench Radicalism could do may be well enough illustrated from the kind of language being employed "out of doors" that spring and summer even by such a Radical pulpit light as the Baptist Dr. Clifford. On May 10th, speaking at the City Temple, Dr. Clifford used such extraordinary language as this:¹

Not unto us! not unto us! No! It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes that we should be the first colonising people of the world, and that at present we are as indispensable to the process of filling and replenishing the earth as we are supreme.

How then has it come about? God's elections are not blind. . . . God chose us His colonisers and missionaries, for He had given us the stewardship of the five great principles on whose maintenance the progress of mankind depends: (1) Liberty of conscience . . . (2) intellectual reverence for truth . . . (3) moral reverence for justice, leading us to leap up in indignation against all wrong, and to fight with dogged stubbornness for universal righteousness; (4) Divine compassion for

¹ Cf. *God's Greater Britain*, Letters and Addresses by John Clifford, M.A., D.D., pp. 174-7. The language was used at the Annual Meeting of the Colonial Missionary Society.

the criminal and the ignorant, the poor and the lost; and (5) unflinching maintenance of a sturdy independence, and a resolute insistence upon self-government as the inherent right of all organised sections of the Empire. The people in possession of these principles, and bent on incorporating them in the life of the world, cannot be kept from empire by any forces whatever . . . the momentum of these ideas will carry us to the government of the earth. We need not *seek* empire; we must have it if we are faithful to these principles. "In ten years," said Lord Rosebery, recently, "we have added 2,600,000 square miles to our possessions—i.e. twenty-two times the area of the British Isles", and new and unparalleled developments of power are at the doors. It cannot be helped, it must be so. The forces these ideas have in them are the pledge, first of all, of the complete consolidation of the Anglo-Saxon people, a consolidation which is being pushed forward just now by the war between Spain and the States; and afterwards we must advance together till the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ. . . .

The summer of 1898 was plainly a time of feverish and not very steady speculation upon the future of the "Great Powers", and, certainly, a "Teutonic" Triple Alliance of Britain, America and Germany, all "Protestant and progressive", had its Radical friends no less than the simpler Anglo-American alliance which Dr. Clifford was trying to forward. Yet another feverish and unexpected turn was given to political discussion after the Tsar had issued his Rescript of August 24th, which proposed international consideration of the means to secure "the maintenance of general peace and a possible reduction of the excessive armaments which weigh upon all nations". For a space the Tsar, despite Port Arthur, was treated more politely in the British Press and pulpit¹ and Dr. Clifford, on a preaching visit to the United States, set the suggested Anglo-American Alliance a new set of aims in bland disregard of the actual warlike activities of both countries. "The Alliance", he cried, "and the establishment of a tribunal for the settlement of international disputes! The Alliance: and the deliverance of the oppressed! The Alliance: and the abolition of the military system! The Alliance: and the universal establishment of the Kingdom of God."²

While Dr. Clifford was indulging in the peculiarly irritating

¹ Cf. *God's Greater Britain*, p. 193: "I will say nothing about Russia except this, that the message which has recently come from the Tsar is one which is so pacific in its tone as to be prophetic of great aid in securing the ends for which the English-speaking peoples have been working so long."

² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

form of Pharisaism to which Anglo-Saxondom is most prone in international affairs, America and Britain had both been busy in warlike empire-building. September 1898, indeed, was a specially eventful month for the British Empire. On the 2nd occurred Kitchener's "great victory" of Omdurman; on the 6th a Turco-British *fracas* took place in Crete which led to "decisive British naval action" in the Near East; and on the 8th Kitchener started up the Nile to order Major Marchand's small French force out of Fashoda despite the Anglo-French crisis certain to result from this "Anglo-Egyptian" claim to have re-acquired the whole Sudan by virtue of Omdurman. Though it soon became obvious that Omdurman had been rather a piece of well-organised butchery than a battle, the whole British Press indulged in the loudest and longest paeans of national self-gratulation on the signal revenge that the peerless "Tommy Atkins" had taken for General Gordon.¹ The Navy quickly had its turn when a Moslem mob inflicted some casualties on the British troops who attempted, after the Concert's resolution to bestow improved administration in Crete, to take the Customs House of Candia out of Turkish hands. Nobody seems, indeed, to have exulted more loudly than the Radicals when the guns of a British Fleet, freed temporarily from the restraints of the Concert, enforced an ultimatum involving not only the surrender of "guilty" Turks for trial and execution but the virtual expulsion of Turkish authority from the island. Pharisaism was complete when France's objections to withdrawing from Fashoda were met by lofty professions of Britain's mission to expand the good work already done in Egypt to the farthest corners of the Sudan and by dangerous abuse of the French Army, whose credit, despite its able colonial expansionism, had already been perilously besmirched by the Dreyfus case.

It will be revealing to see how anti-militarist Radicals attempted, at the pre-Sessional constituency meetings of November, to keep touch with "public opinion" without breaking too obviously from their past. Here is Channing, Radical M.P. for East Northants,

¹ Cf. W. S. Blunt, *My Diaries, 1888-1914*, under September 9th: "On Monday the 6th news came of the defeat of the Khalifa and the taking of Omdurman. . . . The slaughter of the Dervishes seems to have been premeditated and ruthlessly carried out . . . there must have been a wholesale massacre of the wounded and fugitives. The figures given to-day are ten thousand counted corpses, sixteen thousand wounded who had crawled away . . . and only three thousand to four thousand prisoners!!! . . . The whole country, if one may judge by the Press, has gone mad with the lust of fighting glory. . . ."

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opening tactfully with a reference to the Tsar's "appeal to the nations in the interests of peace":¹

"Liberals," he declared, "should welcome proposals so sincere and wise with generous response. Russia was too gigantic to be developed on agriculture alone. She needed to build up industries and expand trade, and this hope meant a call for peace.

"As a contrast, they had the visit of the German Emperor to the Holy Land, where he went ostensibly to defend Christian traditions, but really to defend Abdul Hamid, and link himself with the worst cruelties of history. That was a contemptible masquerade! Germany was seething with Socialism just because nobler aspirations were crushed by militarism.

"The Tsar's suggestion was no idle dream. Men who cared for humanity would help. In foreign policy Liberals were firm and fearless. They would not surrender everything for peace, but said that every English right should be matched by generous and just interpretation of the rights of others. That was the spirit in which the Liberals were meeting the French crisis. They wished no humiliation of France. They said right-minded Frenchmen had the same sense of justice and generosity, and wished to draw to their side what was best in the French people. But France was in the wrong. England was the trustee of Egypt. They should show no hesitation. England was right. Her just and pure administration had done wonders for Egypt, giving her prosperity. If 'evacuation' were suggested he could not now support it in the Sudan. If English administration could bring similar prosperity he would have no share in checking that result. . . ."

And here is the one warning Channing ventured to throw in about British military action in the Sudan:²

He had always voted against such expeditions. The cruelty and tyranny of the Khalifa and the Mahdi were the justification. But it was appalling that English and Egyptian troops should inflict in five hours as much human suffering as the Khalifa and Mahdi in fifteen years.

Channing had obviously been reflecting on the implications of the butchery at Omdurman and the unpleasant stories circulating of what had been done with the Mahdi's head after his tomb had been desecrated by Kitchener's order.

So typical a Radical as Channing is well worth following through the rest of his November speech-making in East Northants. It is obvious that he was primarily the member for the chapels against "Church privilege", and for the Board Schools against the Church

¹ F. A. Channing, *Memories of Midland Politics, 1885-1910*, pp. 204-5.

² *Ibid.*, p. 205.

schools though he also, like most other Radicals, collected miscellaneous support from farm labourers with longings for County Council Small Holdings, from railwaymen anxious for shorter hours and from factory-workers who disliked landlords. Indeed, it is from the midst of a clutter of indignation upon the "landlord-favouring" Rating Act of 1896 and the "Church-favouring" Education Act of 1897 that Channing's opinions on foreign affairs have often to be disengaged. Yet it is interesting to find Channing letting himself really go and attaining a fine bellicosity on one foreign theme at least—"the terrible Turk". Memories of the "Grand Old Man" on Bulgarian and Armenian atrocities must have been with many as they heard their member exulting thus on November 14th:¹

They rejoiced that Crete was at last set free. Crete was free to-day because Turks were Turks and an English sailor was an English sailor. Lord Salisbury had bound himself in coils of diplomacy for two years, but now the blood of Englishmen was shed, Admiral Noel instantly pointed his guns on the murderous Turks; within twelve hours not a Turkish soldier remained at Candia. He would have liked the same policy for Armenia. France and Russia would join England in really doing something.

When Lord Salisbury came in he had sympathy in abundance, but what had he done to save one Armenian life and wind up that chapter of massacre? Our sailors would gladly have blown the Sultan's palace to ruins. That was the policy to have ended those atrocities.

Possibly this kind of language was as electorally useful to Channing as the sample immediately following and beginning:

The Tories shifted burdens from the rich to the poor. Farmers paid more than their share of rates, but the Tory Rating Act, instead of putting half the rates on the owner of the land, put them on Trade, Industry and Labour. Democracy would fail if the people would not think out questions. . . .

Meanwhile the strain that the "public's" Imperialist mood put upon the Opposition leadership was rising. While Harcourt and Morley were known to have but the scantiest sympathy with the latest developments of Imperialism, Lord Rosebery made his hearty approval very obvious. Accordingly a movement by Rosebery's friends to put him back in the Party Leadership threatened

¹ F. A. Channing, *Memories of Midland Politics, 1885-1910*, p. 206.

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to develop rapidly, and such a series of successes as British policy seemed to be winning, throughout the autumn, certainly appeared to make "Little England" leadership fatal for a party already suffering from dangerous handicaps. A November which saw Kitchener, back in London, the hero of the British public, and France adding to the Imperialists' triumph by capitulating on Fashoda,¹ convinced Harcourt that he could help his party best by laying down the Leadership before it became a subject of contention at the December meetings of the National Liberal Federation. On December 8th, Harcourt wrote his resignation-letter to Morley, declining to continue in a "disputed leadership" and welcoming the chance of taking his own line in Parliament, free from responsibilities for the party. And a diarist, who heard much of the inside of politics, rejoiced that a powerful voice would now be raised against Imperialism in a fashion impossible before. Here is W. S. Blunt's entry in his diary for December 16th:²

The event of the day is Harcourt's retirement from the leadership of the Liberal party. The true reason of his retirement is the conversion of the whole party, or at least the whole Liberal Press, to Jingo Imperialism. I wrote yesterday to congratulate him on his published letter. To-day I have a line from him in answer. He says: "*Anche io* have escaped out of gaol and am a free man." I hope that his tongue and Morley's will be let loose to attack the militarism of the day, of which Rosebery is the most outrageous champion. They will have plenty to say and will give dissentients heart. There must be a few lovers of liberty left in England, but for the moment they have no voice more powerful than Labouchere's. I consider Harcourt's retirement a distinct gain for liberty, if not for Liberalism.

But Blunt was, perhaps, too optimistic in that season drunk with revived "prosperity" and the sense of almost limitless and effortless national power. Nothing, for instance, illustrates the plight of the British Opposition more than its allowing the four successive by-elections which immediately preceded the opening of Parliament on February 7, 1899, to go to Government candidates

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1899, under November 4, 1898, p. 368: "Lord Kitchener of Khartoum was presented with the Freedom of the City of London at the Guildhall, and with a sword of Honour. At a banquet in the evening, Lord Salisbury announced that the French Government had decided to evacuate Fashoda." And under November 30th: "Lord Kitchener propounded a scheme for the establishment of a Gordon Memorial School at Khartoum and asked for £100,000 to ensure success."

² W. S. Blunt, *My Diaries*, 1888-1914.

unopposed.¹ And that this should have been the most politic thing to do, in view of the large differences revealed among Opposition's Front Benchers when they addressed the country that winter, only shows the apparently hopeless plight to which Radicalism had been reduced. Harcourt, it is true, encouraged the Welsh Radicals to persist against Jingoism while Morley, in his hard-bitten Scottish constituency of Montrose, publicly lamented that the Sudan had been re-occupied without necessity. Morley feared not to add that Peace, Economy and Reform were being undermined by "Colonial Expansion" and the costly fighting that had followed and would continue to follow in its train. But Asquith,² Grey, Kimberley and Fowler seemed, to the Liberal Press, to take a more "practical" line, and if Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was, on February 6th, selected as the Liberal Parliamentary leader to open on the morrow, it was partly, at least, because he could be interpreted as having supported the Government on the Fashoda issue, despite the grave risks of war.

If the plight of the British Opposition was such as to arouse the contemptuous pity of the Government Press, that of the Irish Opposition was much worse. The British Opposition could, at least, continue to play with hopes that the "Land and Drink Questions" or, even, if unpopular High Church Ritualism continued to grow, the "Disestablishment Question" might help them to better times. The Irish of the House of Commons, however, seemed to be sinking into complete powerlessness and discredit. Riven by the old feud between Parnellites and Anti-Parnellites, bitter new animosities had aligned themselves under the names of Dillon, Healy, O'Brien and Redmond until even Irish-American financial support appeared to have dried up in disgust. It seems that during the 1899 Session the Anti-Parnellite bank-balance fell at one stage to below £250, and that numbers of Irish members

¹ Cf. *The Times* file for the Kirkdale (Liverpool) election of December 9th, the Aylesbury election of January 6th, the Newton (Lancs) election of January 12th and the Epsom election of January 23rd.

² Cf. *Cassell's History of England, 1895-1901*, p. 187: "Mr. Asquith, in whom many professed to see the rising sun of the Liberal party, deplored the retirement of Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Morley, but at the same time took occasion to traverse the allegation of the latter that 'the Liberal party had become infected with the plague of Jingoism, Imperialism and Militarism' . . . As regarded the Sudan . . . he considered it a notable achievement to have secured (Egypt) against future danger, to have swept off the face of the earth a desolating cruelty not less brutal than that of the Turk, and to have restored to civilisation and liberty a long stretch of wasted country. . . ."

were unable to come to London or, at least, to stay there continuously, for lack of financial support.¹

Under Gladstone, Liberal money might have been made available. But Liberal party funds were doubtless not what they had been, and, in any case, the Irish search for favours from Balfour, and the Irish support of Conservatism on the "Voluntary Schools" of England, had broken up the *entente* of 1886-95 so thoroughly that many British Liberals held themselves free to wash their hands of Home Rule.² The situation, in fact, seemed ripe for Balfour to offer Ireland more valuable Conservative "benefits" in the shape of a final £50,000 per annum from the Irish Church Surplus in aid of University education under "religious" controls.³ Some time before the 1899 Session opened, therefore, the Leader of the House sent up, in the form of a letter to an East Manchester constituent, a *ballon d'essai*. It contained the suggestion of establishing two new teaching universities in Ireland, a Roman Catholic one for Dublin, balanced by a Protestant and Presbyterian one for Belfast. The establishment of a "State" University for the Catholics had been the demand of the Catholic Episcopate since the days of Peel, and a warm welcome was given to Balfour's letter by the Irish Catholic community. But Irish Protestants refused to hear of any new "surrender to Rome", and so did the National Protestant League; the Nonconformist Political Council had objections of its own to a Catholic-Conservative pact; and it became obvious that Balfour's idea would have to be allowed to take root slowly. In any case a useful amount of good will had been created for Government among the Catholic hierarchy.

¹ Cf. *Cassell's History of England, 1895-1901*, pp. 190-1: "An Irish M.P., writing to a Nationalist journal, admitted and lamented the decadence of the Irish Parliamentary party, which he declared to be no longer a fighting force, not a force of any kind. Although there were seventy members of the (Anti-Parnellite) party, the number taking part in the divisions of the present (1899) session would not so far average twelve members on each occasion. This condition of affairs he attributed solely to the ingratitude of the Irish people, who had refused to compensate its poor but honest representatives for their sacrificed time and ability." It is plain that Balfour's new "Conservative benefit" of 1889, the Act "establishing a Department of Agriculture and other industries, and Technical Instruction in Ireland" did not help Nationalist agitation.

² Cf. *Ibid.*: "On the Irish Question Sir Henry (Campbell-Bannerman), at one with Mr. Morley, bound Home Rule colours to his mast; Lord Kimberley, Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Asquith were practically united that other questions must be given precedence over Home Rule in the Liberal programme; and Sir Henry Fowler held that the alliance with the Irish party had been dissolved, and Home Rule thereby shelved. . . ."

³ Cf. *R. B. Haldane, An Autobiography*, pp. 128-33, for Balfour's skilful enlistment of Opposition's University expert on the work.

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Chamberlain, of course, was also on the pre-Sessional platform. If he could hardly impart to his audiences the secret Anglo-German bargaining that had taken place on the subject of carving Portuguese Africa into "spheres of influence",¹ if he himself hardly, perhaps, understood how dangerous was the growing Uitlander reliance on his "vigour",² there was critical enough matter in his speaking. Thus an oration to the Wolverhampton Chamber of Commerce found him publicly pressing France to end Britain's grievances in respect of Madagascar trade and the antiquated French claims in Newfoundland. A Birmingham speech a few days later connected Imperialism with the great "prosperity" of the time and asserted that such prosperity could not be maintained without it. Never, according to Mr. Chamberlain, had the signs of almost universal prosperity been so evident; never before were the numbers of unemployed so small in proportion to those fully employed; never were the necessities of life cheaper, or the remuneration of capital and labour higher and more assured; and never before was the influence and power of the country more completely established abroad. It was in this attitude of complete self-assurance that Chamberlain was setting himself the task of eliminating another outstanding "grievance" of Britain's, the position of British Uitlanders in the Transvaal. Though Milner, British High Commissioner, started back to South Africa at the end of January 1899 with instructions "to keep the peace with Kruger unless he were very outrageous", President Kruger was facing, in February, a stiff British intervention against the Transvaal's dynamite monopoly, the subject of much complaint by British gold-mining interests.³ The first move had been made to force Kruger to concede either "Home Rule for the Rand" or a wide enfranchisement of British-born residents, acceptable to Britain as the alleged "Suzerain Power".

¹ Cf. Garvin's *Chamberlain*, iii, 311-20.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 382-3, for the first Uitlander petition to the Queen handed in to the British Vice-Consul at Johannesburg, on Christmas Eve, 1898.

³ The claim to intervene under the trade clauses of the London Convention of 1884 was of dubious validity in view of the wording of these clauses. But the Transvaal Government understood that it was being served with a new kind of notice (cf. Fitzpatrick, *The Transvaal from Within*, pp. 342-60).

CHAPTER XVI

OUTBREAK OF THE BOER WAR

"Why was greater Westminster to be set up? . . . He could not conceive why the Government proposed to set up the great Wandsworth. . . . Why were the rich districts joined together in the schedule of this Bill, while the poor districts were almost wholly ignored? . . . The Bill proposed to transfer the power of sanctioning the loans raised by the local councils from the County Council to the Local Government Board. Why? . . . There were great inequalities at present in regard to the rates of the different governing areas of London, and he would like the House to remember that equalisation of rates was not a modern cry of piratical county councils. . . . Was it wise therefore to set up a body like the proposed municipality of Westminster, with its enormous rateable value, one-seventh of the whole rateable value of the metropolis? Such a body would be tempted to throw every difficulty in the way of proposals of this nature which might be made for the benefit of the poorer classes of London. . . . The City was untouched. . . . The Administration of the Poor Law was untouched, the Metropolitan Asylums was left out, and the Bill would set up a condition of things which could not be permanent, these local municipalities constantly exercising pressure to increase their powers at the expense of the London County Council."

Herbert Gladstone leads Opposition objections to the London Government Bill, March 21, 1899.

"Parliament meets to-day. . . . The Irish factions . . . are not unlikely to express . . . the seditious and disloyal sentiments they dare not publicly avow out of doors on this side of St. George's Channel. This display can do no present mischief, and it may well serve a useful purpose if British Radicals do not forget it the next time its authors come whispering to them with feigned protestations of the 'union of hearts'. With this exception, and some possible ebullition of self-conceited vanity from a handful of extreme Radical 'cranks' if we may borrow the expressive American phrase, we feel assured that members of all shades of opinion will rally to the support of her Majesty's Government."

The Times editorial, October 17, 1899.

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He shall mark our goings, question whence we came,
Set his guards about us, as in Freedom's name.

He shall take a tribute, toll of all our ware;
He shall change our gold for arms—arms we may not
bear.

We shall drink dishonour, we shall eat abuse
For the land we look to—for the Tongue we use.

We shall take our station, dirt beneath his feet,
While his hired captains jeer us in the street.

Long forgotten bondage, dwarfing heart and brain—
All our fathers died to loose his shall bind again. . . .

KIPLING on Kruger in *The Old Issue*, October 1899.

CONSERVATIVE politicians, preparing the business of the 1899 Session, could hardly have asked for more apparently favourable conditions than those ruling early in the year. Here is one report on the prosperity of the season through which the country had just passed:¹

In the main a fairly prosperous year has to be recorded for 1898, being the fourth in succession since the inauguration of the improvement which set in in 1894. As previously, the metallic interests have led the way and acted as a stimulus to others, previous records being surpassed in several directions. Agriculturists have also had a good year, and this, with the prosperity in metals and shipping, has led to increased building operations and extensions, thus giving the working classes full employment all round. . . .

To find an almost contented Miners' Conference listening early in 1899 to praises of Mr. Chamberlain and the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1897 is to be reminded of another factor in the situation favourable to Government.² It is not, perhaps, surprising to discover concealed Conservative strategists meditating whether the time was not ripe for quite resolute measures—and not merely in South Africa. There were certainly those in industry who, stimulated by the Engineering Employers' victorious recovery of "freedom of management" in 1898, were eager to do likewise in other trades and felt that, if the growing threats of American and German competition were only stressed enough, feeling against Union restrictions might grow not only in Parliament but among operatives themselves.³ In the "City", too, a party was growing which held that the Conservative majority was now in so secure a position that preparations might well be made for a forthcoming Budget which should not put all the cost of armament increases upon the income-tax payer and the Drink and Tobacco trades. It was time to re-educate the "public" to the old sweep of indirect

¹ *The Times*, January 7, 1899.

² *Ibid.*, January 12th, for a report containing these things: "Mr. Parrott (Yorkshire) said that the Act was a great improvement on any Act of Parliament that had been passed in favour of the working classes of this country. Mr. R. Brown (Scottish Miners' Secretary) said that the experience they had had was that it was the best Bill that had been passed yet . . . Mr. Cowey (Yorkshire) . . . said he believed Mr. Chamberlain intended the Act to be a good Act (Hear, hear), and he believed that he had opposition . . . on the part of wealthy people and employers. . . ."

³ Based on *The Times* file, 1898-1902.

taxation with its sugar duties, for example, and even its corn duties if they were but kept on the light, post-1846 scale.¹

The "practical politicians" of the Cabinet knew, of course, that there was no surer way of weakening themselves and re-exciting a powerful and belligerent Opposition than to take the advice that was here being offered them. For the time, at any rate, the "Labour problem" could be left to the strength of Employers' Federations and to the Law's dislike of pickets, while budgeting, despite armament increases, was not yet so difficult but that a large increase of indirect taxation was not better reserved for such an eventuality as War. While "bloated armaments" and Imperialism still awoke bitter Radical and "Labour" hostility, it was the height of impolicy to think of adding to the grievance by what would inevitably be called "taxation of the poor". In the end, a mere Budget of Sinking Fund raiding and increased wine and stamp duties gave "Little Englanders" joyous enough declamation upon the mounting "price of Imperialism".²

Ministers' biggest legislative proposal for the Session was a London Government Bill which finally annihilated great hopes among the Radical-Socialist "Progressives" in control of the London County Council. For years these had claimed that when London's twenty-three Vestries and fifteen District Boards met their inevitable fate, the London County Council was the proper authority to take over their important Street and Health services which could then be put under the skilled and unified technical management proper to the world's greatest capital. But Conservatives had not the slightest intention of increasing the power and functions of a Council whose "Socialist extravagances" meant, it was said, unnecessarily burdensome rates. Instead, they put forward the ingenious plan of handing over the old Vestry powers, with some increase, to new authorities, acting sometimes over considerably wider areas and given all the pomp and circumstance of Borough status, complete with Mayors, Aldermen, Borough Councillors and even Town Clerks. It was probably true that the grand new names were calculated to evoke more civic pride and ambition than

¹ Cf. *The Times*, February 27th, which favoured 1s. duty on corn and $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per lb. on sugar in order to permit the beginning of the reduction of income tax towards the level of 8d. in the pound. One of the justifications alleged for this plan was that in war-time a return of income tax from 8d. to a higher level would make a suitable first resort for a Chancellor of the Exchequer.

² Cf. *Hansard*, May 1st, 2nd, 11th and 12th.

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those of the Vestry era. It was probably true also, as Conservatives contended, that London's "neighbourhoods" desired to retain some Local Government individuality and were, for the most part, heartily opposed to ranking merely as divisional administrative areas of the London County Council. But, undoubtedly, a Bill for setting up as many as 28 Metropolitan Boroughs was neither bold nor administratively far-sighted. For years Radical stalwarts like John Burns¹ were to denounce the Bill for its transparent Conservative tactics of pushing forward bodies, elected on "microscopic local issues", at the expense of the L.C.C., and, indeed, using these authorities as a sort of check on the L.C.C. and its claims. One of the most hotly pushed of L.C.C. claims had always been for the right to control the City's great resources and its central position for the common benefit of all Londoners. Now the London Government Bill, it was alleged, had supplied the City with a bodyguard of twenty-eight Metropolitan Boroughs almost as interested as the City itself in restricting the activities and defeating the claims of the only body elected to speak for Londoners as a whole, and especially poor Londoners. The new City of Westminster was particularly suspect.

Possibly Conservative strategy is even better illustrated by two smaller Government Bills of the Session, a Bill to increase the facilities which local authorities might offer to workmen, anxious to buy their own houses, and a second Bill of a faintly Protectionist flavour, though one capable of being explained away. Here is the Conservative Attorney-General enlightening Cowes on the Bills on March 11th:²

It had been for more than 20 years the privilege of the Conservative party to initiate legislation for the benefit of the working classes and the improvement of their condition. They desired that working men should become the owners of their houses and not be obliged to take them under such circumstances that they were always paying rent and that any improvement they made in those houses belonged to the landlords and not to themselves. It was the man with money to lose that the Government wished to encourage and not the man who had no money and wanted other people to give him theirs. They would hear from the speech of Mr. Chamberlain on Tuesday next (March 14) what the Government proposed to do. . . . It was proposed that a working man who had got together some £30 or £40 and whose house was worth £300 or thereabouts should be able to go to the local authority

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, March 3, 1902, London Water Bill, Second Reading.

² Cf. *The Times*, March 13th.

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and borrow the rest of the purchase money at a low rate of interest, repaying it by instalments. . . . He passed to another Bill which was now going through the House of Commons and was opposed by only 18 members of the extreme Radical party. He referred to the Food and Drugs Bill. It was desirable that poor people who could not, of course, examine their food and see that it was unadulterated should be protected, and therefore the Government wished to ensure in respect to all imported goods security that not only should they be unadulterated, but should bear their true name, so that people might know what they were paying for and have full value for their money. . . .

In the speech on the Small Houses (Acquisition of Ownership) Bill promised by the Attorney-General, Mr. Chamberlain, often taunted with having forgotten the social programme, including Old Age Pensions, he had flaunted when out of office, contrived to make much of very little. The infinitesimal results the Bill actually brought, results accurately enough predicted by the Opposition, would hardly have been forecast by one listening to "Joe's" confident account of the advantages that would come from raising from £200 to £300, the maximum house-price entitling a working-man purchaser to a municipal loan. Another "benefit" for the working classes, included in the Bill though without any visible effect in the future, was the reduction of the deposit required from assisted working-man house-purchasers from one-quarter to one-fifth of the purchase price.¹ But the Bill was doubtless an electoral asset, and even stiff Conservatives were ready to risk a maximum loss of the value of 1*d.* rate in the effort to diffuse "property", and the political sentiments accompanying it, among the working classes.

Another thing that did the Government no harm was Chamberlain's pose of moderation and patience in regard to Uitlander grievances in the Transvaal. Here is *The Times* commenting on the Commons' proceedings of March 20th on the Vote for the Colonial Office:²

The grievances of the Uitlanders were recapitulated by Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett who maintained that nothing had been done to remedy them, and, indeed, that things were worse than before.

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, March 14th. The reason why the Bill remained practically inoperative was the extent to which Building Societies already encouraged all would-be home-purchasers of any stability or solidity. Town Council offices had no experience to compare with that of the Building Societies, and their necessarily stiffer and more cumbersome procedure normally smothered municipally assisted house-purchase at birth.

² *The Times*, March 21st.

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Mr. Chamberlain's answer was to ask whether the object of such speeches was to induce or compel his Majesty's Government to send an ultimatum to President Kruger backed by the threat of war. Such a policy would not carry public opinion with it in existing circumstances though the Government of the Transvaal would be very unwise to persist in a course of provocation that might easily prove too much for British patience. At present, however, it is by no means certain that the Uitlanders themselves would welcome armed interference. Mr. Chamberlain . . . did not blink the fact that, of all the promises which President Kruger made more than three years ago, not one has been performed up to the present hour. In the matter of the franchise, of education, of the dynamite monopoly, and of the claim that Johannesburg, the milch-cow of the Transvaal, should be granted municipal institutions . . . either nothing at all has been done or some illusory proposals have been put forward to mock the claims of justice. . . . This being so, what is the duty of the British Government? Interference, except on the strongest grounds is inadvisable, and the main grievances do not apparently amount to breaches of the Convention. . . . The Boers must still be allowed to go in their way. . . . Time is not on their side. A large, growing and progressive community of European origin cannot be kept permanently in a state akin to servitude. . . .

Against the attitude taken by Chamberlain and mirrored above, it would obviously have been difficult for the most "Little Englander" of Radicals to urge a complaint likely to win a hearing with even a small portion of the "public".

Matters began to be different in May when Chamberlain was known to be contemplating a serious decision after the receipt of a widely signed Uitlander Petition supported by strong covering language from Milner as British High Commissioner. A prominent Radical group, known as the Liberal Forwards, was alarmed enough by the rumours of the day¹ to adopt the following resolution on May 19th:²

That this Committee condemns the secret and corrupt methods now being employed to force a quarrel upon the Republic of the Transvaal, and earnestly warns all true Liberals against the specious misuse of democratic arguments to justify a war of aggression.

But the Liberal Forwards were here going too fast. Chamberlain had certainly used serious language about some aspects of Transvaal policy in a dispatch of May 10th. But the language had been

¹ Cf. *The Times*, May 17th, for the wild reports circulating that seven or eight British military officers were under arrest in Pretoria on a charge of high treason and that important papers had been seized.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, May 22nd.

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measured, and the Colonial Secretary had closed with the conciliatory suggestion of a personal conference between the Transvaal President and the British High Commissioner. When Kruger, urged on by the Cape Dutch and the Orange Free State, consented to a conference to be held at Bloemfontein, the Free State capital, the situation appeared to improve vastly. Even after the Bloemfontein Conference of May 31st-June 5th had broken down, the Transvaal's offer of naturalisation to Uitlanders of seven years' residence, clogged though it was by tricky conditions, seemed to end the possibility of "public opinion's" being captured for a display of "Imperialist violence". *The Times* of June 23rd was chagrined enough to print the following:

In a telegram which we published yesterday our Johannesburg correspondent observed that the peace party in this country was doing much to increase the danger of war. It is by no means the first time that people who sentimentalise over war have exercised a malign influence in bringing it about. . . . If Mr. Kruger has any real friends they cannot too promptly and too earnestly set themselves to work to disabuse his mind of the notion that this country is divided into a peace party and a war party, of which the peace party is the stronger. We all belong to the peace party as long as we can. With really insignificant exceptions we all belong to the war party when peaceful methods of securing substantial interests have been exhausted. . . .

Language like this in *The Times* is almost a proof of uneasiness on the part of the "war party".

The day before *The Times* article appeared, Ministers took a step that diverted political attention considerably from South Africa. Lord Salisbury's long anxiety to do something for Anglican clergy, injuriously affected by falling corn prices and reduced tithe rent-charge, at last found vent in a Tithe Rent Charge (Rates) Bill introduced by Mr. Long.¹ It proposed to give the clergy the same concession already made to the "agricultural interest" and to reduce rate-liability on tithe rent-charge by half, at a total cost, it was claimed, of no more than £87,000, a sum less than the increase of the local taxation accounts put at the disposal of the local authorities by the Exchequer. Instant war on the Bill was declared in the name of the Opposition, and the Bill's proposed "fresh endowment of the Church of England from the rates" was, of course, of the

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, June 22nd.

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very kind likely to kindle all the fires of Radical and Dissenting wrath. Here is Campbell-Bannerman, Leader of the Opposition, publicly rejoicing in the City Liberal Club at the new "confidence and spirit" that his party had gained from the combination of South Africa and Tithe issues with which it had been presented:¹

There are signs—we do not require to open our eyes more widely than usual to see them—within the four walls of the House of Commons as well as in the constituencies that there is a certain waning in the power of the present Government, and a corresponding rise in confidence and spirit in the Liberal party (Cheers). There is, however, one difficulty in the way of anyone who says a word on political questions at the present juncture. . . . I speak of course of the question of South Africa. . . . I can see nothing whatever in all that has occurred to justify either warlike action or military preparation (Cheers). . . . Now just as the South Africa question absorbs our attention over anxieties beyond these shores, so there is one domestic question at the present moment which overshadows all others—I mean this astounding Bill for clergy relief (Cheers). . . . Now friends and foe alike have been puzzled to account for this unnecessary rock of offence which has suddenly been planted in the path of an amiable House of Commons towards the close of a placid Session. . . . Apart from the particular and technical faults of this measure, we object to it, and you object to it, for a threefold reason. In the first instance we object *in toto* to this system of subsidies and subventions, of doles and grants, which is characteristic of *fin de siècle* Conservative finance (Cheers). Then we object to special grants made to favoured classes; and lastly we object to any fresh endowment to any Church (Cheers).

. . . What were the outstanding features in the present Parliament on which everyone has been harping? . . . That, while failing altogether to satisfy the expectations they had raised by their promises of social reform, by which promises they gained the majority they enjoy, this Parliament and the present Government—which control this Parliament in a way that no Government ever controlled a Parliament before . . . this Government, while they have done nothing to redeem their pledges, have given boons of public money to their friends, as they thought them, the agricultural ratepayers, leaving out all rural ratepayers who were not agricultural and leaving out the urban ratepayers, on whom the rates were much more irksome and burdensome, and in the second case to clerically governed Church schools which exist, no doubt, for the benefit of a certain modified and inefficient form of education, mainly as a preparation for a sect (Cheers). That is the salient domestic history of this Parliament . . . but "lest we forget" the Government must needs put forward this precious Bill which is charged with all the faults of both these measures and unites them in a most beautiful combination (Laughter).

¹ *The Times*, July 1st.

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The electoral effectiveness of this type of case against Ministers seemed to be proved when, on July 6th, a double by-election at Oldham, transferred two Conservative seats most decisively to Radicals.¹ For a few days even *The Times* lost its buoyant self-assurance and took to proving that the Oldham victors were not "Little Englanders" and that Cape approval for Kruger's projected concessions to the Uitlanders was not worth serious attention. And in regard to the stiff struggle that the Opposition was making against the Tithe Rent Charge (Rates) Bill, *The Times* printed the following revealing matter on the fundamental clash of material interests involved:²

At bottom the opposition to the Bill, so far as it is not the outcome of party tactics pure and simple, is rooted in an antipathy to any measures for the relief of the inequality of burdens resulting from the fact that local rates fall exclusively upon real property and not at all upon personal property. The system of so-called doles has been an irresolute and ineffective attempt to lessen the pressure of this inequality, and it has always been denounced by those who think that land, which is steadily losing in value, should remain for ever subject to charges from which the forms of wealth that have more rapidly increased continue free. The millions made in manufactures and commerce swell the total wealth of the country, while they wholly escape the incidence of rates, levied exclusively upon classes which as a rule have seen their incomes lessened and their outlook narrowed.

This, however, was possibly less electorally effective than, say, Harcourt's slashing description of the Bill as a measure for the relief of the two richest men in every parish, the (tithe-owner) squire and the parson.

Throughout the rest of July, Imperialists were still showing anxiety lest a domestic situation tempting Ministers to over-caution in South Africa might not, at the price of some "unreal concessions" to the Uitlanders, play right into Kruger's hands.³ From the Imperialist point of view there was cause for anxiety even

¹ *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1900, p. 140.

² *The Times*, July 11th.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, July 15th: "It is not to be tolerated, however, that this natural tendency to blink the facts of the case should be supported by such statements as those published yesterday, as a special cable message, at the London office of the *Standard and Diggers' News* of Johannesburg, a paper described by Mr. Schreiner . . . as the organ of the Transvaal Government. . . . It is not the first time that this journal has put forward absolutely unfounded assertions. . . . Yesterday the British public were informed from this source that her Majesty's Government had telegraphed a message of warm approval of the Volksraad's franchise proposals. . . . All this is described as the victory of an imaginary peace party over an imaginary war-party in the Cabinet."

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about Chamberlain though he figured as "head of the war party" in Boer and Radical writing on the alleged Cabinet situation. Chamberlain had warned Milner repeatedly that the political situation at home needed unceasing vigilance, and his readiness, at one stage, to assume that Transvaal concessions had been real enough to end the crisis led to bitter talk of a "political Majuba".¹ Even when Chamberlain had retraced this step and sent his critical Dispatch of July 27th, the Transvaal Government seemed likely to have plenty of bargaining advantages both at the proposed Joint Inquiry into the Uitlander Franchise and at the subsequent conference between Kruger and Milner to discuss the Arbitration procedure to be used in case of future Anglo-Boer disputes. On August 4th the Transvaal agent in London reported to his Government that the Boers' Radical friends were most alarmed by the suggestion that the Transvaal, in order to assert the "independence" denied by Chamberlain in the Dispatch of July 27th, was likely to refuse the proposed Joint Inquiry into the Uitlander Franchise.

"Labouchere," he wrote,² "said to me this morning: 'Don't for goodness' sake, let Mr. Kruger make his first mistake by refusing this; a little skilful management and he will give Master Joe another fall.' He further said: 'You are such past masters in the art of gaining time, here is an opportunity; you surely haven't let your right hands lose their cunning, and you ought to spin out the negotiations for quite two or three months.' . . ."

Radical activity gave Imperialists more to complain of during the month of August, though the close of the Parliamentary Session on August 9th undoubtedly allowed Chamberlain a freer hand. If, for example, the prorogation of Parliament made it easier to announce in the newspapers of August 10th that more troops were to be dispatched to Natal, a colony with reason to fear the results of the heavy Boer arms-importation that had been proceeding for some time, that item of intelligence did not escape unfriendly Radical criticism and commentary. When, again, the Transvaal Government, on August 19th and 21st, met Mr. Chamberlain's Dispatch of July 27th by offering to enfranchise Uitlanders of five years' instead of seven years' residence if Great Britain surrendered the claim to Suzerainty, Imperialists were

¹ Cf. Garvin's *Chamberlain*, iii, 420.

² Cf. Thorold's *Labouchere*, pp. 404-5.

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indignant at the Radical praises lavished on the arming Boers. Here is the sardonic *Times*:¹

While the advocates and apologists of the Transvaal in this country are lauding the generosity of the terms offered by the Government at Pretoria . . . it is important to observe that the Transvaal Government are making military preparations on a great scale—paid for out of the money extorted from the unrepresented Uitlanders. . . . The distribution of Mauser rifles and of ammunition among the burghers appears not to be confined to the territory of the Republic. It is said the Dutch farmers inside the Natal border . . . are also being armed. . . .

It was on August 26th that Chamberlain at last made the speech for which Imperialists had been waiting. Apparently both he and the Cabinet had decided that the situation could not be allowed to drift much longer, and a political garden party at Chamberlain's own Birmingham home, became the occasion of a speech that drew the attention of the world. Here are the most arresting passages spoken by the Colonial Secretary:²

We have been, as you know, for the last three months negotiating with President Kruger. We have made perhaps some little progress but I cannot truly say that the crisis is passed. Mr. Kruger procrastinates in his replies. He dribbles out reforms like water from a squeezed sponge, and he either accompanies his offers with conditions he knows to be impossible, or he refuses to allow us to make a satisfactory investigation of the nature and character of these reforms (Cheers). . . . I do not think it will be denied by anyone . . . but those who are very bitter partisans . . . that we have been very moderate, very conciliatory . . . we have exhibited a patience which is really unparalleled in the relations between a paramount and a subordinate state. . . .

The issues of peace and of war are in the hands of President Kruger and of his advisers. Will he speak the necessary words? The sands are running down in the glass. The situation is too fraught with danger, it is too strained for any indefinite postponement to be tolerated. The knot must be loosened, to use Mr. Balfour's words, or else we shall have to find other ways of untying it.

And if we do that, if we are forced to that, then I would repeat now the warning that was given by Lord Salisbury . . . and I would say that if we are forced to make further preparations, and if this delay continues much longer, we shall not hold ourselves limited by what we have already offered, but, having taken this matter in hand, we will not let it go until we have secured conditions which shall once for all establish which is the paramount power in South Africa. . . . I am confident

¹ *The Times*, August 24th.

² *Ibid.*, August 28th; Garvin's *Chamberlain*, iii, 438-9.

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that we shall have the support of the vast majority of the people of the United Kingdom, and I will go further and say of the vast majority of the people of the British Empire (Hear, hear). . . .

For all the Radical attacks on the "Highbury speech" it would doubtless have forced on a speedy and not inequitable settlement if the Boers had not known themselves to be stronger than anyone in England suspected. But the Boers, knowing their strength, retorted to the semi-ultimatum of the "Highbury speech" by withdrawing their improved Uitlander proposals on September 2nd. And here is the formidable Radical lead which Morley gave to anti-war sentiment on September 5th, in a speech at Arbroath that awoke some Imperialist apprehensions:¹

There are times when right, when justice, when an unselfish regard for the welfare of mankind, when the necessities of national self-preservation . . . force a community to take upon itself the grievous responsibilities of war. There is no such case here (Hear, hear, and cheers). But when you hear, as you may by and by, of . . . brilliant victories and immense carnage, and your children ask you what it is all about, what is your answer going to be? Franchise? Five years or seven years? Is that what you are killing men for? *The Times* the other day had an article—its eyes were full of tears, it was wringing its hands—because owing to the bad government of the South African Republic dynamite was so many shillings a ton. . . . Is that what you are going to kill men for? Paramountcy? No. . . . Do not say to one race, you are to be at the top and the other shall be at the bottom. No. Let there be fusion not paramountcy. Are you going to war in order that you may have your hands free to tear up a treaty . . . and to wipe out, to crush a little state. . . ? A war of that kind will not be a war with honour, it will be a war with deep dishonour (Hear, hear, and cheers). And what a mockery, what a mockery will such a war make of all the professions that have been made emphatically . . . within the last few months, especially on behalf of peace! What a farce, a hypocritical farce to send your important representatives to The Hague. . . . What an example for us to the armed camps and scheming Chanceries of continental Europe! What a shadow cast upon the reign of the Queen! Yes Empire, they say Empire. Yes but we do not want a pirate Empire (Cheers).

"The man in the street", however, and the man in the newspaper office, were growing dangerously tired of a South Africa Question that seemed to drag on interminably owing to Boer obstinacy and suspicion. They were, therefore, disposed to give a very warm

¹ *The Times*, September 6th.

welcome to the final Government effort of September 8th to secure a prompt end to the negotiations by demanding "an immediate and definite reply" to a British communication. This communication repudiated, indeed, the Transvaal's claim to full sovereignty but offered to accept the Transvaal's own suggestions of August 19th for the Uitlanders, provided inquiry promised they would be effective. As the British Government, despite its "absolute" repudiation of full Transvaal sovereignty, was here offering to rest content with a mere quarter of the Raad seats for the Uitlanders and was also offering Kruger negotiations for the establishment of a Tribunal of Arbitration on future Anglo-Boer differences, the British "public" was not disposed to quarrel with its Government's sharp language in pressing for "an immediate and definite reply" and in notifying the Boers that a reply that was "negative or inconclusive" would leave Britain free "to reconsider the situation *de novo*".¹ Certainly, this British language was still cautiously kept some way short of a definite ultimatum, and that seems to have served Government well against the Manchester Anti-War Meeting of September 15th, organised under a Bright as Chairman and with Morley and Courtney as principal speakers. Of the Chairman it was reported that he rose "amid cheers, groans and general uproar" and, that notwithstanding preliminary observations to prove his desire not "to carry on what the *Daily News* called a pro-Boer agitation", his speech was soon drowned by "continuous groaning". Despite the national platform reputation of both Morley and Courtney who followed, their speeches underwent "continuous interruption", Morley suffering particularly from loud chanting of *Rule, Britannia* by part of his audience. That was perhaps its answer to Morley's carrying the rest by rhetoric like the following:²

You may carry fire and sword into the midst of peace and industry—such a war of the strongest Government in the world against this weak little Republic . . . will bring you no glory (Renewed and prolonged cheering). It will bring you no profit, but mischief, and it will be wrong (Hear, hear). You may make thousands of women widows and thousands of children fatherless. It will be wrong (Cheers). You may add a new province to your Empire. It will still be wrong (Renewed cheers). You may give greater buoyancy to the South Africa stock and share market (Hear, hear). You may create South African booms. You may send the price of Mr. Rhodes's Chartered up to a point beyond the

¹ Cf. Garvin's *Chamberlain*, vol. iii.

² *The Times*, September 16th.

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dream of avarice. Yes, even then it will be wrong (Loud and continuous cheering).

This appeal of Morley to the old Radical dislike of armed oppression of the weak and to the newer dislike of war-promoting Stock Exchange millionaires obviously came near enough to success to show the Cabinet the continued need for delaying "decisive action". The same lesson was further enforced when on September 21st Harcourt made a speech critical of the Government's course and associating both himself and Campbell-Bannerman, his successor in the Opposition Leadership, with Morley's views.¹ Certainly, the new British Dispatch of September 22nd, though declaring that the Boer failure to accept the conditions of September 8th had freed the British Government from previous commitments, harped sufficiently on the allegedly lapsed conditions to make many believe that its actual effect was "to build a golden bridge for the Boers" and to give "President Kruger another chance". It would seem, in fact, that some of Chamberlain's colleagues had this in mind when discouraging the immediate production of an ultimatum on the plausible ground that such a paper, delayed for a week or ten days and then dispatched by mail, would allow British reinforcements, already on their way, to reach South Africa in what was expected to be overwhelming strength.² But while Chamberlain began drafting his ultimatum and the British reinforcements were moving across the ocean, the Transvaal Government resolved to anticipate events and establish a military supremacy in South Africa. Winning the alliance of the Boers of the Free State, the Transvaal set on foot a mobilisation of surprising speed and thoroughness³ which soon convinced originally incredulous observers that no less than an offensive against the British Empire was intended. Chamberlain was, in the end, congratulated that the Boers had greatly lightened his task of carrying home opinion with him by sending their own ultimatum of October 9th while he, on Milner's advice, had withheld Britain's. Nothing could have stiffened the British "public" more than the apparently incredible impudence of a 48-hour ultimatum from a community of 63,000 Transvaal Boers, backed though they were by a Boer

¹ *The Times*, September 22nd.

² Cf. Garvin's *Chamberlain*, iii, 445-9, 459-63, for incidental proof that both Salisbury and Balfour were restraining influences.

³ Cf. *The Times*, October 2nd, for a report of twenty-six military trains having moved towards the Natal frontier in a single day.

community of perhaps similar size in the Free State. In the short Parliamentary Session of October 17th-October 27th, a Session called to arrange for the financing of the war by a Vote of ten millions, Ministers were in a far stronger position than they would have been if war had resulted from an ultimatum of their own.

There was a Radical attempt, nevertheless, not to mention others from the Irish, to go farther back than the Boer ultimatum and even to represent it as the desperate Boer reply to the unrelenting Imperialist pressure personified in Chamberlain, Milner and Rhodes. A Radical private member, Philip Stanhope, undertook to do what no Front Bencher, with his party's fortunes at stake, could venture and to move that the House amend the Address and declare:

But we humbly represent to your Majesty our strong disapproval of the conduct of the negotiations with the Government of the Transvaal which have involved us in hostilities with the two South African Republics.

Here is one report of a salient part of Stanhope's speech of October 18th, and it represents very well the average Radical attitude at the commencement of the war:¹

"He for one," Stanhope was reported as saying, "had come to the absolute conviction that while he acquitted the Government as a whole of any kind of fixed intention with regard to these transactions—on the contrary he believed they were animated by peaceful motives—the Colonial Secretary, Sir Alfred Milner, with Mr. Rhodes and his associates had for the last two years made up their minds that war, and war only (Cheers) should be the termination of this crisis, and they had laboured to this end for the last twelve or fourteen months (Cheers). He hoped that the Liberal party would never in any form or shape give their sanction or approval to transactions which they believed did not redound to the honour of the country. . . . While the war was in progress the people could do nothing but grant the money that was necessary. On the other hand he desired to dissociate himself from those who said that this war must be pursued to the bitter end . . . it would be the duty of the country to see that the war was arrested at the first possible moment . . . this war would never be a source of credit or pride . . . (Cheers)."

It was after a two-day debate that Chamberlain spoke, and one of his severest passages was directed against Campbell-Bannerman

¹ *The Times*, October 19th.

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who was charged with hoping to give his party the best of both worlds by agreeing to blame Chamberlain's "Imperialist" diplomacy while yet refraining "patriotically" from the personal direction of Votes of Censure. Here is the Colonial Secretary's retort, and coupled with it, his reminder to the country that the Boer record in regard to the great negro majority in South Africa was an indifferent one:¹

. . . the leader of the Opposition . . . cannot have it both ways. He has spoken frequently in the country during the past three months; he spoke to us the other night . . . but he cannot claim credit for his patriotism in avoiding everything which can by any possibility embarrass the Government in the pursuit of a difficult task, and at the same time continue to make these insinuations . . . for three months past we have been the mark not only of the vague charges of the rt. hon. gentleman but of the most unmeasured abuse, the most grotesque misrepresentation (Cheers), and then are we to be told now that it is patriotic to make these accusations and these misrepresentations, but that it is unpatriotic to bring them to the test of a reply in this House (Cheers). . . .

I wish to say a word upon another subject. . . . When we have talked of grievances hitherto we have confined ourselves to the grievances of the whites. . . . The House will bear in mind that when we granted the Convention of 1881 and substituted the articles of the Convention of 1884 we undertook the protection of the natives of the Transvaal (Loud cheers). Those natives had been our subjects. They were the majority of the inhabitants. How have we kept our promise? Sir, the treatment of the natives of the Transvaal has been disgraceful (Cheers), it has been brutal (Renewed cheers). . . . We have heard a great deal of the Great Trek. I do not know whether the hon. gentlemen who talk about the Great Trek had information different from mine. . . . The Great Trek took place mainly and chiefly because, in their own words, they wanted to wallop their own niggers (Cheers).

The profuse cheering that greeted Chamberlain's telling counter-attack on the Boers' record is a sign that he was here felt to be providing the best retort to those Radicals who pictured the Boers as innocent and harmless rustics who, because they possessed a Naboth's vineyard in the Rand, had been consistently plotted against by Rhodes, Chamberlain and German-Jewish millionaires. If Chamberlain's speaking, too, won a decision of 362-135 against amending the Address, he was possibly better pleased by a vote taken eight days later outside the House. In the East End constituency of Bow and Bromley, a by-election brought a sensational

¹ *The Times*, October 20th.

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fall in the Opposition poll and enthusiastic singing of *Rule, Britannia* and *God Save the Queen* to greet a Conservative return with double the votes scored by the Liberal.¹ The constituency apparently shared the general hope of victory and peace by Christmas.

Despite the unpleasant shocks of late October and November, despite the investment of one large British force in Ladysmith, Natal, and of two smaller ones in Kimberley and Mafeking, the "public" remained confident of the ability of Buller's considerable army in Natal to end the war speedily and victoriously. It is almost ludicrous to find "the New Patriotic Song, now sung at the Music Halls and Theatres with immense success" still being chanted during the "Black Week" of December 10th-15th. The new Jingo ditty was named *Kruger's Dinner Party or We'll be there*, and here are a few of its lines:²

Oh, Uncle's giving a party and he's asked us all to come,
We'll be there!

We're marching up from Durban town, behind the fife and drum
And we'll be there!

There's some from Dublin City, there's some from out the West,
The Devon lads be 'vitty', there's Gordons with the rest;
Oh, Uncle, don't you trouble, there is time enough to spare—
We'll be there!

Chorus

So please you, Uncle Paul, light the Lantern in the Hall
(We know we're welcome as the flow'rs in May),
Just keep the pudding hot for the lively little lot
Who are coming up to dinner Christmas Day.

It is perhaps needless to observe that the only British soldiers who ate their Christmas dinner in Pretoria did so as prisoners of the Boers.

¹ *The Times*, October 28th.

² The British Public was now familiar with Kruger's nickname of Oom Paul (Uncle Paul).

CHAPTER XVII

THE BOER WAR, FIRST YEAR

"We had done a great wrong (Cheers), a wrong of which he believed there was scarcely an Englishman living who would not bitterly repent (Cheers). The problem before them of governing two white races was exceedingly difficult, and it had never been so atrociously bungled, and so irreparably bungled, as it had been in South Africa. . . . He wanted to say no word that would give offence or cause irritation, but when he saw it suggested that the present High Commissioner should go to the Transvaal to arrange a settlement he felt that that would be the last link in the chain of folly that had marked the whole affair (Cheers). . . .

"Had they thought of the relations between Imperialism and social reform? Could we continue this process of territorial expansion with our increasing Budgets? What we wanted was resolute and sustained attention to strengthening our industrial position. What was the use of conquering new markets when it was as much as we could do to hold the markets which we had already (Cheers). As to the Liberal policy, he said that the day when the Liberal party forsook its old principles of peace, economy and reform the Liberal party would have to disband and to disappear (Cheers). Who would take its place? The Socialists. . . . He had in the past set his back to the wall against the Socialists, not because he did not respect the fervour of the men . . . but because he thought their means were ill-chosen and would do mischief to the character of the individual, and would handicap the country in the struggle for an industrial position upon which the lot of the toiler depended as much as that of the capitalist. But if he were to choose between the Socialist and the Militarist, with all his random aims, his profusion of the national resources, his disregard of the rights and feelings of other people, he himself considered the Socialists' standards were higher (Cheers.) . . . The Liberal party would not disband (Cheers). . . ."

John Morley at Oxford, June 10, 1900, before the Palmerston Club.

"The best settlement that can be made now will be worse for all parties than the settlement which could have been effected by tact and self-restraint had the Boers never been goaded into war. I adhere to everything that I have ever said as to the

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causes that brought on this war, with all its disastrous results. I retract not one word that I have published in *Truth*, or spoken in Parliament, or written in any letter, or uttered in any shape or form about the Chamberlain diplomacy and the Chamberlain war."

LABOUCHERE in *Truth*, September 6, 1900.

"At Manchester the other night Mr. Balfour stated that it had always been his intention to do something for the families of the soldiers who fell in the war. In the House of Commons two Welsh members brought the matter forward. Mr. M'Kenna proposed that the families of the soldiers who fell should be compensated just as if they had met with an accident at a factory. The Government contributed £1,600,000 to the landlords and the parsons while the families of our own soldiers were starving. It was I who had the honour of seconding Mr. M'Kenna's motion. What did the Government do? Mr. Balfour put up two Front-Bench Ministers to speak against the motion. Not a single Tory spoke in favour of it. . . ."

The "pro-Boer" Lloyd George at Conway, September 26, 1900.

AMONG Government misfortunes in the winter of 1899-1900, not the least was the notorious "Leicester Speech" of November 30th by which Chamberlain, for a time, completely discredited himself. At an hour when nearly the whole world was ringing with denunciations of Britain's attempt to "assassinate" two small Republics, it was almost to invite rebuff to renew, as Chamberlain did, the suggestion of a Triple Alliance of Britain, America and Germany. Even if the Washington and Berlin Governments had been more favourable than they, in fact, were, pro-Boer feeling was so strong alike in America and Germany that both Governments would still have been compelled to announce a complete negative on all suggestions of alliance. And as if this were not sufficiently mortifying, Frenchmen's objections to a part of the speech that threatened and insulted them were almost universally felt to be completely justified. Chamberlain, in short, could not have made a more unfortunate oration or one offering better opportunities for Opposition attack.¹

The humiliating defeats of the "Black Week" of December 10th-15th added to the strength of Government's critics, and only Ministers' rapid resolve to annex the reputations of Lords Roberts and Kitchener for military operations in South Africa prevented something like the Government-destroying atmosphere of 1855 from arising. There was, in truth, a demand for a Ministerial reconstruction and the retirement of Lord Lansdowne from the War Office. And when, in January, Balfour attempted, after the first shock was over, to talk the country back into complacency, even *The Times* turned on him angrily. Here is a quotation:²

It is fortunate for the Government that the Opposition which they will have to face when Parliament meets next month is not only the weakest of our time, but is also incapacitated by the previous conduct of most of its leaders from making the most of its opportunities. . . . Mr. Balfour . . . bids us consider our losses as the "inevitable incidents" that occur in every protracted campaign, and reminds us that even in our most successful wars we have generally begun by being beaten. . . . Language such as this, in the teeth of the admissions he has been compelled to make . . . betrays . . . a very imperfect appreciation of the popular view. . . . There is need of apology, and of ample apology on the

¹ Cf. Garvin's *Chamberlain*, iii, 508: "Abroad condemnation was universal. . . . At home apologists were few and restrained. . . . *The Times* . . . was icy in rebuke. . . ."

² *The Times*, January 9th.

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part of the Cabinet for serious errors both in policy and in warlike preparation. . . . Even in the present House of Commons, where the Leader of the Opposition is still more deeply pledged than Mr. Balfour to the championship of the War Office, the Government ought to have quite enough to do to answer for their own sins and omissions without gratuitously undertaking to cover up and excuse all those of Pall Mall into the bargain. . . .

It is, of course, impossible to say what would have happened if the latter part of January had brought news not merely of the disaster of Spion Kop but of the fall of Ladysmith.¹ Fortunately for Government, no fatal news from Ladysmith came during the critical House of Commons debating on an Opposition amendment to the Address which was moved when Parliament reassembled on January 30th, for a new Session. The Opposition amendment arraigned not only Government's conduct of South African affairs since 1895 but Ministers' obvious lack of preparedness for the war they had done so much to bring about. It was an amendment designed to gather both the "pro-Boer" and "patriot" votes of Opposition and to attract, besides, Conservative malcontents who had now added Hicks-Beach to their list of delinquent Ministers because of alleged Exchequer strangling of necessary war-expenditure. Unfortunately for Opposition's hopes, the more discontented a Conservative member felt, the less likely he was to give a vote which might place Campbell-Bannerman, flanked possibly by Harcourt and Morley, in a position to imitate the "surrender of 1881". When, indeed, Chamberlain intervened in the debate with a speech that helped to erase from many Conservative minds the memory of the unfortunate Leicester address of November, it was precisely to this fear of another 1881 that he found he could make his strongest appeal. Here is the Colonial Secretary's most striking passage:²

I say, speaking for the Government, that so far as in us lies, there shall be no second Majuba (Ministerial cheers). Never again, with our consent, while we have the power, shall the Boers be able to erect in the heart of South Africa a citadel from whence proceed disaffection and race animosities (Hear, hear). Never again shall they be able to endanger the paramountcy of Great Britain (Ministerial cheers). Never again shall they be able to treat an Englishman as if he belonged to an

¹ Cf. *The Times*, January 29th: "It can hardly be necessary to dwell upon the extreme probability that we shall learn, a little sooner or a little later, of a catastrophe almost without precedent in our military history. . . ."

² *Ibid.*, February 6th.

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inferior race (Cheers). . . . We were asked the other day to dispel the gloom which it was said had settled upon the nation. I do not accept the phrase (Cheers). I know of no such feeling. I know, as I have said, of anxiety, of regret, and even of a certain perfectly natural irritation, but I know of no hesitation, no vacillation (Cheers) . . . every reverse has only been the signal of more offers of patriotic assistance from this country and new offers from our fellow-subjects across the sea. . . .

Another blow at Opposition's long-discussed amendment was delivered on the same evening of February 5th. It was announced in the name of an Irish party, reunited by pro-Boer feeling, that the amendment could not be supported since it did not require recognition of the independence of the two Boer Republics.¹ On February 6th, therefore, Government defeated the Opposition by the overwhelming vote of 352 against 139, and, next day, an independent Irish amendment, demanding the cessation of the war, was rejected by 368 votes to 66. Before long Parliament was discussing a new Army programme, revealing somewhat greater Ministerial enterprise, and then came hints expanding into certainty that Lord Roberts was achieving unusual success in South Africa. Meanwhile two Welsh Radicals had led an Opposition demand for the reopening of the "Jameson Raid" Inquiry because some important documents, never laid before it, had lately been given to the world in the columns of a continental newspaper. The "Hawksley Telegrams" of the *Indépendance Belge* might, at another time, have seriously imperilled Chamberlain, and even as it was, the division of February 20th on the reopening of the Raid Inquiry yielded 152 votes against Government's 286. But already the "public" was hardly to be interested any longer in such matters as compared with the relief of Kimberley on February 15th and Lord Roberts's increasingly hopeful pursuit of the Boer force that had beleaguered it. Indeed, the public's mounting war-enthusiasm and growing antagonism to the war's critics was promoting a dangerous cleavage inside the Opposition between the official machine, lukewarm towards the war, and "Imperialist Liberals" looking to Lord Rosebery, who, be it remembered, was an alternative Premier capable of being charged with the formation of a Coalition Cabinet in certain eventualities.² Cleavage within the

¹ *Hansard*, February 5th, Dillon.

² *The Times*, February 23rd: "A significant movement has just been started within the Liberal party. It has seemed to some of its more reasonable members that unless it can be brought more into line with the overwhelming public opinion of the country, the results at the next general election are likely to be rather disastrous. . . ."

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Opposition was further increased when such a stream of stimulating war-tidings came as gladdened England after mid-February. Beginning with intelligence of the surrender at Paardeberg on Majuba Day, February 27th, of the Boer army retreating from Kimberley, news rose to a first climax with the relief of Ladysmith on March 2nd and to a second and loftier one with the fall of Bloemfontein, the Free State capital, on March 13th. It began to grow ever more difficult to undertake in public such "pro-Boer" speaking as that to which "extreme Radicals" were inclined, speaking normally urging that the Boers had been stampeded into war by fear of the machinations of British Imperialists and that peace should be offered on reasonable conditions at the earliest possible moment.¹

Ministers, indeed, could hardly have wished for a more favourable Budget atmosphere than Hicks-Beach had, on March 5th, when asking the nation to submit to its first war-taxation. The Budget, it is true, did not err on the side of boldness for it proposed to borrow full £43,000,000 and to raise by new taxation only £12,317,000. But the heavy borrowing could be justified on the assumption that the Loan charges might soon be transferred to an indemnity account, payable from Transvaal and Orange Free State resources. And in raising over half his new taxation from an added 4d. on the income tax, Hicks Beach could claim to be resisting advice from his own friends who would have liked to see, alongside the inevitable increases of beer, spirit and tobacco duty, a smaller increase of income tax and more items like the added 2d. per lb. on tea. Here, in fact, is the eve-of-the-Budget advice that had been offered by *The Times* and largely rejected by Hicks-Beach:²

For many years past the broad questions of Imperial finance have been systematically shirked by one Chancellor of the Exchequer after another. Indirect taxation rests upon an absurdly narrow basis, and direct taxation has been used in times of peace and prosperity as it never ought to be used save in times of severe financial stress. Our existing condition from a financial point of view can satisfy no serious thinker. It has been arrived at by the slavish deference of successive Governments to the childish claptrap about a free breakfast table, and by their

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, March 15th, Sir Robert Reid, for "the serious recent disturbances in many parts of the country" when pro-Boer speaking had been attempted. Cf. also *Ibid.*, March 13th, Lord Salisbury, for the rejection of Boer overtures based on continued Boer independence.

² *The Times*, March 5th.

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slavish fear of perchance losing votes at a general election. Well, there is now an opportunity such as rarely occurs to deal boldly with the question of indirect taxation. There is no reason to fear the consequences of imposing taxes the necessity for which is apparent to all, for purposes which the overwhelming majority of the nation entirely approve. . . .

That the Chancellor had not chosen to tax the breakfast-table more than by his 2d. per lb. on tea aroused severe criticism in *The Times*.¹ But nothing would, in fact, have done more to reinvigorate "extreme Radical" criticism of the war than to have attempted the beginnings of a fiscal revolution in its wake, and a revolution largely at the expense of the working classes and for the benefit of the income-tax payer. When sugar, however, not to mention corn, had been left alone, the Cabinet doubtless considered that it had done its part in preventing the baffled "pro-Boers" from obtaining a more respectful hearing for their case against the war. Even the unique success of the aged Queen Victoria's drive through the London streets on March 8th and 9th and her later and bolder appearance in Dublin on April 4th might have been reduced by a different Budget. As it was, the enthusiastic reception given even in Dublin to the aged sovereign, come to express her gratitude for the valour shown by Irish regiments, did something to remind the world that the "reunited Irish party's" violent protests against Ireland's being taxed for a war that Irishmen detested did not express the whole truth about their country.² Irishmen were more impressed by the extensive Canadian, Australian and New Zealand volunteering in aid of England than could well be admitted by Nationalist politicians.

To what a pitch of confidence the still-improving war situation was taking Government's great majority in May is worth telling in some detail. Here is Chamberlain at Birmingham on May 11th, giving a complete negative to Radical suggestions for allowing the Boer Governments peace on negotiated conditions:³

¹ Cf. *The Times*, March 6th: "It is unfortunate that a statesman of greater energy and courage is not at the Treasury. A pedantic adherence to a dangerously narrow scheme of taxation may be a cause of trouble long after Sir Michael Hicks-Beach has ceased to be remembered except as a financier who, when he had the chance, was incapable of profiting by an opportunity that may never present itself again. . . ."

² Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1901, p. 374. The Queen also visited Kilmainham Hospital on April 14th; held a review of troops in Dublin on April 21st and did not, in fact, leave Ireland until April 26th.

³ Cf. *The Times*, May 12th.

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If we are the victors in this contest, the territories of these Republics must be and shall be fully incorporated in her Majesty's dominions (Loud cheers) and under the British flag (Cheers) . . . the separate independence and existence of these states, constantly intriguing as they have done with foreign nations, constantly promoting agitation and disaffection in our own colonies, that independence, that separate existence shall no longer be tolerated (Cheers). . . .

And here is *The Times* on May 17th finding fault with the Duke of Devonshire for discouraging plans to use the favourable hour to obtain highly controversial legislation longed for by different sections of Government's majority:¹

The Duke of Devonshire who has a tendency to pour cold water on the enthusiasm of his friends took the opportunity of pointing out why the Government should not endeavour to use its Parliamentary strength to deal with such questions as liquor trade legislation, obligatory service in the Militia, and the reform of the representative system in Ireland. Much may be said against any particular proposals in reference to each of these questions, but to put forward the plea of *non possumus* is surely somewhat weak when the Unionist alliance has a majority of about 130 in the House of Commons.

To remember the unique explosions of popular joy that filled the country for days after news of the relief of Mafeking arrived on May 18th is to appreciate still more why strong party men urged that the opportunity should not be missed to reintroduce compulsory Militia service, to reduce Ireland's representation in the Commons to the proper proportion of about eighty, and to reassure publicans and brewers of their right to compensation when loss was inflicted on them by acts of public policy. For a time, indeed, Government's strength appeared to be growing towards a seeming adequacy for all these dangerous tasks. At home, Ministers were fortified by a social programme which included the extension of the Workmen's Compensation Act to agriculture, and a Housing of the Working Classes Bill, admitted by Opposition to be beneficial if inadequate. Abroad, meanwhile, Roberts had swept from the Orange Free State into the Transvaal, occupied Johannesburg on May 31st, and entered Pretoria, the Transvaal capital, on June 5th. For months British people, unaware of the determined guerrilla warfare preparing for them, expected the end of Boer resistance at any moment. That Opposition should still, however,

¹ *The Times*, May 17th.

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have been able to worry Ministers at the end of June on hospital conditions in South Africa and, in July, on another of their alleged "doles" to their friends is, perhaps, the best proof of the Duke of Devonshire's wisdom in not presuming too much on a burst of temporary prosperity for carrying a revolutionary proposal like the revival of compulsory Militia service.

The Duke of Devonshire's caution, and even that of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach in framing the Budget, had reference to the growing possibility of a General Election in which Ministers would, after the end of Boer resistance, ask the nation to approve their past South African policy and obtain authority to make a new all-British South Africa. Here, indeed, is Chamberlain uttering almost an election speech as early as June 19th:¹

"Is it not noteworthy," said the Colonial Secretary, "that at the present time when some of those in this country who call themselves Radicals have been encouraging President Kruger and his advisers by their attacks on those who are responsible for the policy of this country, have been denying the grievances of their fellow-subjects in Africa, have been denying or quibbling over our right to interfere, have been condemning our armaments and embarrassing our negotiations—I say is it not wonderful that the great democracies of Australia and Canada, who themselves enjoy unrivalled liberty and freedom, have been only too eager to claim their share in the great work of the Empire in securing for all its citizens the rights which belong to them—the rights which in this case were promised but insolently withheld? . . ."

After this ingenious attempt to use the primitive political notions of the Canadian backwoodsman and the Australian sheep-hand to confound the over-sophisticated home-Radical, the Colonial Secretary turned upon his principal opponents by name.

"I must return to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman," he said mockingly, "not because he is Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman (Laughter), but because he is the Leader of the Opposition. . . . He has an answer to the question how the settlement is to be achieved. He knows the solution; he is in no difficulty; it is simple enough. He said at Glasgow 'by the application of Liberal principles'. I do not know whether that satisfied his audience. The blessed words 'Liberal principles' are a fetish with some people. . . . We want to know what Liberal principles are nowadays (Laughter). . . . Is Mr. Courtney a Liberal? In that case the application of Liberal principles . . . involves the re-establishment of the independence of the two Republics. Is Professor Bryce a Liberal? Then

¹ *The Times*, June 20th, reporting the speeches of the Duke of Devonshire and Mr. Chamberlain to the Women's Liberal-Unionist Association.

the application of Liberal principles means . . . the establishment of two protected States. . . . Is Mr. Morley a Liberal? . . . in that case you would immediately have to get rid of Sir Alfred Milner, and you would have to get rid of the Colonial Secretary. . . . Is Lord Rosebery a Liberal? . . . I gather that his views . . . are the same as ours. . . . Now which of all these Liberal principles does Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman propose to apply? . . . eight months ago . . . Sir Henry could not see any cause of war whatsoever . . . and a short time afterwards he was in favour of prosecuting the war with the utmost vigour until our territories had been freed from the invader. Well, he left us to imply—I admit he did not say so—that when that had been accomplished we ought to sue for peace and, I suppose, apologise to the two Presidents for the trouble we had put them to in invading her Majesty's dominions (Laughter). He has advanced a little farther now, and in his last speech he contemplates annexation, though he thinks it (the British annexation of the Free State) has been precipitate. . . .

"I note—that the members of the Opposition have at present one great preoccupation. They want to know when the general election is coming (Laughter). I understand, I appreciate their anxiety but I cannot gratify their curiosity (Laughter). . . ."

The Colonial Secretary might, perhaps, have contrived to sound less irritatingly confident of electoral triumph if he had known that damaging allegations were about to be made against the War Office's organisation of military hospitals in South Africa.¹ Fortunately for Ministers, it was Burdett-Coutts, Conservative member for Westminster who had discovered how lamentably inadequate had been the War Office's foresight in making provision for fever and sickness casualties among the troops who had been pressed on against Bloemfontein and Pretoria. Burdett-Coutts, of course, had no party-axe to grind and seemed satisfied when Government, under pressure from Fleet Street, consented to enlarge the Commission of three it had originally intended to dispatch to South Africa. Meanwhile Lloyd George, who was steadily growing into the most dangerous of the younger Radical opponents of the war, had sought, with doubtful wisdom, to make a purely political use of the hospital revelations. Here is one passage, packed tight with insinuations against Government, that caused excitement and anger in the Commons on June 29th:²

"There was evidently great hurry to get to Pretoria," he declared. "It was to be captured by a certain day on which the war was to be declared at an end. He would not say that it had anything to do with

¹ *The Times*, June 28th to 30th.

² *Ibid.*, June 30th.

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the general election ('Oh, Oh'). He would not have made that suggestion but for the fact that no one in the House doubted that the lives of the troops had been sacrificed in Natal and in other places for political exigencies (Cheers and cries of 'Oh'). They had an example in the great hurry that was shown to relieve Kimberley. It was that recklessness with regard to human suffering and the loss of human life that led to the war; and it was at the bottom of all this series of disasters which had so impressed the country and for exposing which the country owed a deep debt of gratitude to the hon. member for Westminster (Cheers)."

It may be doubted whether, on this occasion, more orthodox Opposition speakers, content merely to picture overcrowded hospitals and swollen mortality rates, did not do Government more real harm than the Welshman. Lloyd George's speech was certainly of the kind to reconcile angry Government members to Ministers, blameworthy though they might be.¹

A more orthodox party struggle proceeding towards the end of the Session was that on the Irish Tithe Rent Charge Amendment Bill. Irish landlords had long been pressing Conservative Ministers for "justice" in the shape of a downward revision of Tithe Charges fixed, it was claimed, in the still agriculturally prosperous days of 1872 and intolerably burdensome since rents had fallen between thirty and forty per cent. The Irish landlords had a kind of case even if it suited the Nationalists to pretend that the Bill was solely one to relieve the rich at the expense of the Irish poor, the supposed beneficiaries of the Tithe part of the Irish Church Surplus under the Irish Church Act of 1869. How the matter of this further specimen of alleged "Conservative doles to Conservative friends" was going to be put to the Radicals of British constituencies, Asquith demonstrated on July 16th when resisting Third Reading in an almost perfect party speech. Here is an extract:²

"In truth," said Mr. Asquith, "this proposal to relieve the Irish tithe-payer of the sum which he had contracted to pay is but the culmination and the climax of a series of measures for which this Parliament is responsible (Cheers) for the subvention and relief of particular classes and interests (Loud cheers) at the expense of the community at large.

¹ Cf. *The Times*, June 30th, for Balfour leading the indignation: "I have never seen a more discreditable exhibition. . . . I do not sully my lips by saying that this is wholly untrue. . . . I say for a member of this House to accuse our generals of being the tools of party, of being men prepared to see their soldiers unnecessarily butchered before their eyes, or subjected to untold tortures to please a body of politicians at home. . . . I say that to adequately characterise such a statement as that the word 'discreditable' is utterly inadequate (Cheers)."

² *Ibid.*, July 17th.

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The series began in 1896 when the English and Scottish landlords were relieved of half their rates. . . . It continued in 1897, when a large bounty was given to denominational schools. . . . It was developed in 1898 when the Irish landlords, in order to buy that assent, which is not to be bought with money (Laughter and cheers), to the establishment of local government in Ireland . . . were relieved of their half of the poor rate. In 1899—these things occur under the present dispensation with the monotonous regularity of the seasons (Laughter and cheers)—there was the proposal to relieve the ecclesiastical tithe-receivers. Now in 1900, lest any session of Parliament should be left undistinguished by one of these enterprises . . . against the community at large (Cheers) we have the proposal to relieve the tithepayer. Yes, but this Bill . . . has . . . a peculiar feature of its own. Hitherto in 1896, 1897, 1898 and 1899 when you have been granting these doles and endowments to particular classes . . . you have in relieving your privileged class . . . made good to the fund depleted the loss which it would have sustained. You have made it good of Imperial taxation to the local rates. Far be it from me to suggest that the deficiency that is going to be created in the Irish Church Fund . . . should be met by Imperial taxation. That is not my proposition. I denounce the whole thing as an injustice. . . .”

The war and war-issues, of course, kept on returning unceasingly to the front of politics in every imaginable guise. Thus, the Colonial Office vote of July 25th became the occasion of warm debate because “extreme” Radicals ascribed to Chamberlain the fall of a Cape Government anxious to offer Cape Dutch “rebels” amnesty terms that the Colonial Secretary, who had suggested life-long loss of civil rights, considered far too lenient. Ministers, indeed, seem to have watched narrowly how the Opposition divided on a motion to reduce the Colonial Secretary’s salary and to have paid some attention to suggestions that the 40 Liberals who had voted with Government on this occasion might be treated with less hostility, at the General Election, than the 31 who had divided against them and the 35 who had followed Campbell-Bannerman in abstaining.¹ It would plainly be no joke to be branded at the polls as a patron and protector of “rebels” who were, in any case, getting off far more lightly, it was claimed, than would have been possible anywhere else in the world.

On August 1st, a week before the end of the Session, Opposition staged a Parliamentary event likely to be of greater electoral assistance to them than the proceedings of July 25th. Harcourt, the Chancellor of the Radical Death Duties of 1894, took advantage

¹ Cf. *The Times*, July 26th. On July 31st *The Times* undertook a further examination of Opposition lobby records throughout the Session.

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of the Second Reading of the War Loan Bill to deliver himself of a jeremiad on the financial burdens that Ministerial policy and the Ministerial war had imposed on the country. A war for which ten millions had been provided in October had now required votes for seventy-one millions, and the end was not yet. The pressure had already been aggravated by a new war account that the Boxer Riots in China had necessitated, and yet further accounts were preparing. An army of occupation, for example, would be needed for South Africa which would not only be costly in itself, but would tend, in view of the recruiting difficulties already experienced before the war, to raise recruiting costs all round. It was a last touch of "little England" malice in Harcourt to deny, correctly as it proved, that any help in bearing these burdens could reasonably be expected by the British taxpayer from the Boers or the Rand mine-owners.¹

Government might have been more hurt by Harcourt's jeremiad if the "public" had really appreciated how every week of warfare since October had reduced the capitalised value of the deserted Rand gold-mines by hundreds of thousands and added to the heavy capital provision that would have to be made, by financially weakened undertakings, for re-starting operations. Fortunately for Ministers the "public" was still expecting the end of the war at any moment and still seeing no special difficulty about Government's plan for charging a good deal, if not all, the cost of the war upon the gold-mine revenues of the defeated Republics. Ministers themselves, of course, had had their private anxieties ever since it had become plain, in June, that large Orange Free State forces were ignoring the British "annexation" and, despite the fall of their capital, fighting on under the admirable guerrilla leadership of de Wet. Ministers' anxieties increased during August when it became obvious that the 119,200 square miles of the Transvaal were, like the 48,236 square miles of the Orange Free State, also to become the scene of determined guerrilla warfare by dour opponents, still very well equipped and quite conscious that it would tax the British forces severely to adapt themselves to veld warfare on the Boers' own ground. There was nothing for it, nevertheless, but to go on unswervingly in the hope that an appearance of unbending determination might yet induce the Boers to abandon a "hopeless struggle" and seek what terms of capitulation were still available. On September 1st, therefore, Lord Roberts with

¹ *The Times*, August 2nd.

very dubious legality proclaimed the "annexation" of the still largely unconquered Transvaal,¹ and the British Press, amid indignant hoots from the Continent, proceeded to egg on the British military to threaten to court-martial Boer civilians, who, under the orders of their own Government, and even in territory unoccupied by the British, should venture to help Boer combatants.²

At home, meanwhile, everything was being made ready for a General Election, calculated to rally all "patriotic" feeling to the Cabinet's support. Thus, on August 23rd, the Government issued as a Parliamentary Paper, letters captured in South Africa, showing three Opposition M.P.s, Mr. Labouchere, Dr. Clark and Mr. John Ellis, all transmitting advice, before the war, it is true, on how President Kruger might "give Master Joe another fall". Labouchere might claim that he was only trying to prevent the forcing on of a costly, dangerous and unnecessary war,³ and he and Ellis, lucky in their constituencies, might even be destined to retain their seats by reduced majorities. But the whole affair was calculated to cover Opposition, and especially that large section of it consistently hostile to the war, with dangerous odium. The proclaimed "annexation" of the Transvaal on September 1st was another factor favouring Ministers who appear, however, to have been hoping for an important military success before dissolving Parliament. A combined military drive was in progress to corner General Botha, the new Transvaal Commander-in-Chief, in the Lydenburg district. Hopes were already declining by September 8th,⁴ and on September 12th *The Times*, fearing that the best General Election season might pass, was urging a prompt Dissolution. When the Press was able to make known next day that "Mr. Kruger had fled from the country he has ruined",⁵ that apparently was made to serve in the place of the hoped-for

¹ *The Times*, September 4th.

² Cf. *Ibid.*: "The annexation of the Transvaal was formally proclaimed by Lord Roberts on Saturday at Belfast. . . . The rights of belligerents will continue to be accorded to any organised bodies of the Boers who are still in arms. . . . But the professedly non-combatant population who are now brought under British law must be made to learn that treacherous acts on their part towards the British forces will be visited with the severest penalties. . . ."

³ Cf. *Truth*, August 23, 1900.

⁴ Cf. *The Times*, September 8th: "We are still waiting for the news of success which we hope will before long attend the combined movement . . . against General Botha in the Lydenburg district. But it would be foolish to underrate the task that lies before our generals. . . ."

⁵ *Ibid.*, September 13th.

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military decision. On the evening of September 17th it was announced that the Queen had signed a proclamation dissolving the existing House of Commons on September 25th.

In the bitter election contests of ensuing weeks, all sections of Opposition united in attacking one part or another of Mr. Chamberlain's record and, at one time, they seem to have been hopeful of recovering, on balance, some 24 of the seats that had been lost in the rout of 1895. Chamberlain's estimate that Government would increase its already large majority was nearer the truth, for if his own hopes of a majority of 150 were not quite attained, there were three more Government supporters after the elections than before. To this result Chamberlain had himself greatly contributed, for without his dozen incisive speeches and the numerous public messages and telegrams he sent out in answer to appealing candidates and agents, Opposition would probably have done better. One of his telegrams has, indeed, become the best-remembered thing about the "Khaki" Election of 1900. To the hotly contested Heywood Division of Lancashire and in support of a Conservative candidate serving in South Africa, the Colonial Secretary telegraphed: "A seat lost by the Government is a seat gained to the Boers." A blunder on the part of the post-office clerk turned this trenchant enough original version into: "A seat lost to the Government is a seat sold to the Boers." This apparent imputation that the Opposition was not only "pro-Boer", but was actually financed by the Boers caused untold bitterness, the more so as "extreme Radicals" like Lloyd George were ready to aver that the Chamberlain family was gaining handsomely from the war, thanks to the Admiralty's partiality for Kynochs Limited.¹

On the whole, considering its numerous handicaps, Opposition must be held to have presented its case vigorously enough against Chamberlain as Colonial Secretary, Chamberlain as the forgetter of Old Age Pensions, Chamberlain as the prime cause of mounting War Debt, and the whole Cabinet as the bestower of undeserved doles upon landlords and parsons. But if the loss of only three seats on balance must be considered an avoidance of the worst by Opposition, an examination of the list of members who were rejected by their old constituencies shows a dangerous mortality among some of the most useful types of Radical representative. Landed men of "advanced" views were rejected in Sir Wilfrid Lawson

¹ Cf. H. Du Parcq, *Life of David Lloyd George*, ii, 241.

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(Cockermouth) and Philip Stanhope (Burnley); London lost in Mr. Pickersgill (Bethnal Green S.W.) and Professor Stuart (Hoxton) two survivors of the hopeful Radical bands first elected in 1885, and the defeat of John Benn (Southwark) deprived Opposition of most useful liaison with the newer "Progressives" of the County Council. The exuberant "patriotism", too, which had seized some of the grimmest working-class quarters of the London area, proved fatal to the "Labour" men, Steadman and Sam Woods, in Stepney and Walthamstow, while Havelock Wilson's defeat at Middlesbrough was symptomatic of the change of waterside sentiment which cost Opposition two more seats at Portsmouth and a seat each at Plymouth and Southampton. The "boom" of 1895-1900, particularly marked of late in shipbuilding, was not yet obviously "on the turn", and dockyard, shipyard and quayside "grievances", which had loomed large in 1895, were greatly reduced in comparative magnitude, both by "patriotic" war-feeling and by the abundant demand on waterside labour that naval increases first, and transport demands for South Africa afterwards, had made. It is to this combination of causes, indeed, that the defeat of two more useful Oppositionists must be assigned, Jonathan Samuel's at Stockton and J. A. Pease's at Tyneside, and other casualties among Opposition's "soundest progressive" elements were Hazell's at Leicester and Albert Spicer's at Monmouth. Finally may be noted Scotland's yielding of a majority to a Conservative Government for the first time since 1832, a result due not merely to the loss of Liberal seats in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dumfriesshire but also to a strong swing of opinion in Sutherlandshire, Aberdeenshire (East), Orkney and Shetland, and the Wick District of Burghs, Highland areas strongly affected in the recent past by Radical "crofter" and Land agitations. Caithness-shire, too, gave evidence of this swing of opinion though in the milder form of ejecting the "pro-Boer", Dr. Clark, to make way for an "Imperialist Liberal" of the Rosebery school, Leicester Harmsworth, brother of the Conservative founder of the strongly Imperialist *Daily Mail*. It is, indeed, well worth remarking before leaving the subject of the 1900 Elections that a second halfpenny morning organ of Imperialism, the *Daily Express*, had been launched on April 24th to share the circulation, profits and power that the *Daily Mail* had already won in less than four years. The progress of both papers seemed to be so much at the expense of

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the Opposition's penny *Daily Chronicle* and penny *Daily News* that much light is shed both upon anxious policy-changing meetings among the proprietors of the threatened journals and upon the reasons for Opposition's particularly unfortunate election results in the London area.

The polling figures gave *The Times*, of course, another chance of pushing its plan to drive Campbell-Bannerman from the Opposition Leadership and to seat Lord Rosebery in his place as an alternative Premier more to its Imperialist taste. Here is the way in which *The Times* campaign was begun:¹

. . . leading politicians on the Liberal side are confident that fully two-thirds of the regular Opposition will refuse to take the little Englander line. How far this will affect Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's position it is difficult to say. . . . We believed him to be a sensible, if not a brilliant politician with a cool head and a good temper. . . . But Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, in his efforts to be all things to all men, has failed to inspire confidence in anybody. After sitting on the fence as long as he could, he has climbed down, according to his habit, on the wrong side. He has committed himself, at the last moment, to the denunciation of any period of Crown Colony Government in the annexed states. . . . He has made himself ridiculous by his prediction that a great Liberal reaction was coming in London. The decisive revolt in Scotland emphasised by the reduction of his own majority . . . is a serious rebuff. It certainly looks as if he would find in the new Parliament that his position is no longer tenable. Lord Rosebery has now, once again, an opportunity of giving a lead to his party. . . .

The Times, however, was still writing in the first flush of post-election confidence. Things were not destined to flow so smoothly for Imperialism as it prophesied. Loud complaints, for example, arose from the Tory party itself when, early in November, a Cabinet reconstruction was announced which the mockers declared to have turned Government into the "Hotel Cecil Unlimited" seeing that three of Salisbury's close relations now sat in the Cabinet with him while a son was just outside as spokesman for the Foreign Office in the House of Commons.² That the Marquis of Lansdowne, too, was promoted to the Foreign Secretaryship after his questionable record at the War Office was not calculated to please

¹ *The Times*, October 19th.

² Salisbury and Balfour, his nephew, were joined in the reconstructed Cabinet by Gerald Balfour, another nephew, as President of the Board of Trade, and by Lord Selborne, Salisbury's son-in-law, as First Lord of the Admiralty. Lord Cranborne, Salisbury's heir, was Foreign Under-Secretary.

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the critics, who considered that the aged Prime Minister should and could have found a better man to whom to hand over his work at the Foreign Office. The news from South Africa, again, made it cheerlessly plain that the Boers were as far from capitulation as ever. Fresh borrowing on a large scale would, therefore, have to be proposed to the new Parliament, as its first business, and Opposition would be able to exploit this and the inevitable taxation to follow. Nor was this all. Opposition now possessed considerable accounts of military "barbarities" in South Africa,¹ a dossier of the Chamberlain family's interest in war-contracts, and a fiercely argued case against the way in which the General Election had been staged and fought. Even Campbell-Bannerman stormed about the General Election in a speech delivered at Dundee on November 15th.²

"The election", he declared, "was a false election (Hear, hear). We know it and our opponents know it, and the best men among them are ashamed of it. They are ashamed of the meanness which hurtled the country into an election at an undesirable time on a flimsy and fallacious plea of necessity, so that a great constitutional proceeding was prostituted, and a fine patriotic sentiment . . . was exploited and taken advantage of for the sordid and selfish purpose of enabling them to retain office (Cheers). And they are still more ashamed of the tactics which were pursued when it was sought to rouse prejudice against us by alleging that we were two-thirds of us traitors, and that we desired the success of the enemies of our country, and that votes given to us would be votes given to those enemies. This allegation reached a depth of infamy in party malice—and let us never forget that it was made on the word of a Minister and repeated by that Minister over and over again—it reached a depth of party malice to which no previous Government has ever sunk. . . . I would sooner see any party with which I was associated suffer direct defeat at the polls than win a vote by devices so dishonouring (Cheers)."

¹ Cf. J. M. Robertson's contributions to the *Morning Leader* under the *nom de plume* of Scrutator, and later collected in book form under the title of *Wrecking the Empire* (1901). Robertson wrote the contributions in Cape Colony and Natal between June and October 1900, and asserted that the Dutch populations of those Colonies were being oppressed and their property looted. He also supplied early information of the farm-burning undertaken in the territory of the Republics in alleged reprisals for shots at the troops.

² *The Times*, November 16th.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WAR DRAGS ON, 1901

"The Opposition appear to have come to the conclusion that in the absence of anything more promising, they may as well try to make an impression on public opinion by denouncing the Education Bill. . . . The Radical organisers are making desperate efforts to persuade the people that the object of the Government is to withdraw education from popular control. . . . The exaltation of School Boards to the position of a fetish is a mark of the decline of the Liberal Opposition . . . the country at large is by no means delighted with the results of the administration of School Boards or at all inclined to enlarge their scope. Among other incidents of the School Board system which have been more disagreeably conspicuous from year to year is the influence which organised bodies of teachers have endeavoured with only too much success in many cases—to exercise over the election of those from whom they have to take their orders...."

The Times, June 7th on the abortive Education Bill of 1901.

". . . It is a Government and a Parliament which is already used up (Hear, hear). . . . It has upon it all the symptoms of senile decay . . . they are doing nothing, they are contemplating nothing, and they are dragging out a listless existence on the dregs of an inglorious and an apparently interminable war. . . . Ten months ago we were told the war was over. Ever since we have been treated to what I may call small detachments of the same kind of representation. We have been told day after day and week after week that the country is being swept by our troops; that the embers are extinguished: and every announcement of that kind is followed by a fresh breaking-out of the flames. . . ."

Sir W. V. Harcourt at the National Reform Union banquet, June 14th.

"The feeling of keen, if perplexed, interest with which the public evidently regard Lord Rosebery's speech at Chesterfield to-night testifies to the peculiar position which the late Prime Minister occupies. . . . The expectations of some, at least, of the public go far beyond the possibilities of the case. It is unwise to ignore the fundamental facts of the situation. Nothing that Lord Rosebery can say or do will shake, in the smallest degree, the Parliamentary position of the Government. The Unionists who are most deeply dissatisfied with

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many things in the conduct of the war and in other departments of administration are convinced that under existing conditions a change of Ministers is out of the question, and that, if it could be brought about by some political cataclysm, it would gravely endanger Imperial interests and weaken the force of the nation in the presence of rankling foreign animosities. . . . But if Lord Rosebery does not possess the necromantic powers which would enable him to overthrow a powerful Government supported by an overwhelming Parliamentary majority . . . it does not follow that he cannot do a great service to the State in his Chesterfield speech. Those who are masquerading as the leaders of a resolute and united Liberal party . . . have no doubt brought things to such a pass that there will be little chance of a Liberal majority at the next general election, even if dissatisfaction with the Government should continue to grow stronger. . . . But statesmen should know how to take long views.

The Times, December 16th, tells Rosebery there will be no Conservative breakaway.

THE necessity for obtaining Parliamentary sanction for further war-expenditure and more borrowing forced Ministers to call the new Parliament together on December 6th. Opposition came to Westminster in an angry mood, which was displayed in such things as Lloyd George's amendment to the Address, permitting him to show to the House the interest that Chamberlain's relations possessed in firms holding Government contracts. Bitter jests on Kynochs Limited came to have almost as much vogue as those on the "Hotel Cecil Unlimited", and in combination doubtless did the Government some harm. A more orthodox way of wounding the Government was taken by Harcourt when rising, on December 13th, to speak to the Government motion for a second reading of the Supplemental War Loan (No. 2 Bill). Here is Harcourt assuring the country that it need not expect to recover any part of the cost of the war from the Boers and that there would be the greatest difficulty in forcing the mine-owner "Imperialists" of the Rand to provide a farthing.

"What," asked Harcourt,¹ "is the present condition of the colonies you have added to your Empire? The land is devastated and the people are ruined. When the Boers return from St. Helena you will not be able to raise revenue from them . . . you will have . . . to support them. . . . You must either feed these people or exterminate them. . . . Then there remain only the Uitlanders. They, I suppose, are to return to Johannesburg and the Rand. . . . What else is there? I see the proposal is made by Mr. Rhodes and his allies that the natives should be taxed . . . if we are going to add to famine an insurrection of the natives that will be an additional encouragement in the situation in which we find ourselves. But I ask the attention of the House to the expectation of the Chancellor of the Exchequer that he is going to derive his revenue from the wealth of the Transvaal. . . . What is the assistance the Chancellor of the Exchequer is likely to receive from the proprietors of this wealth. . . . Of course, I need not say that these men who have amassed incredible fortunes under the tyrannies of President Kruger are loyalists of the first water, patriots beyond suspicion, and Imperialists of the highest class (Ironical cheers) and you would suppose that they were ready to throw their gifts of gold and diamonds in the public exchequer. I have endeavoured to ascertain what is their disposition in this respect. . . . I would say to the right hon. gentlemen that if you want to obtain anything, as you have pledged yourselves to obtain it, for the British taxpayer out of the enormous expenditure of this war, you must be prepared to face the "Kaffir Circus" (Laughter and cheers). . . . It will

¹ *The Times*, December 14th.

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require all the integrity of Parliament (Cheers) to deal with this matter. You will receive the most obstinate resistance and you will receive a refusal to grant a single farthing. . . ."

If Ministers had reason to congratulate themselves on getting their financial business completed by December 15th and Parliament prorogued, they were soon beset by most disheartening news from South Africa. There the Orange Free State burghers, so far from surrendering, had broken into Cape Colony where, not altogether vainly, they hoped to replenish their supplies and recruit large numbers of Cape Dutch to their cause. It could hardly have helped Ministers to have *The Times* of January 7th reporting, for instance, that:

Authentic information concerning the movements of the Boer raiders in Cape Colony is still somewhat meagre. . . . Small parties are making their way south on a very extended front. . . . These widely scattered bands are intended to act as firebrands. . . . Their importance, therefore, depends upon the degree of success they may achieve in stirring up rebellion among the Cape Dutch. . . . This latest development of Boer strategy has found us, as usual, not too well prepared. . . .

The death of Queen Victoria, occurring as it did on January 22, 1901, when the Boer penetration into Cape Colony was almost at its maximum,¹ added to the gloom of a gloomy season. Botha and De Wet, commanding the main Transvaal and Orange forces, could be certainly counted upon to take advantage of British troubles in Cape Colony, and altogether the optimistic forecasts which had allowed Lord Roberts to return home, leaving Lord Kitchener in charge of "small-scale final operations", seemed to have been singularly unwarranted. What relieving touches there were before Parliament reassembled on February 14th came largely from the gathering of foreign royalties, headed by the German Emperor, at Queen Victoria's funeral on February 2nd, and the War Office announcement some days later that 30,000 more mounted troops had been dispatched to South Africa. The specially warm greeting given by the London crowds to the German Emperor was not wholly unconnected with the popular

¹ Cf. *The Times*, January 24th: "Reuter dispatches state that the Boer invasion of Cape Colony, so far as Herzog's commando is concerned, has come to a stop for the time at Calvinia. . . . The colonial Dutch farmers are sullen towards the British, and there is no doubt that while not openly joining the invaders, they are giving them all possible information and assistance."

view that his presence was an indication that he had more sympathy than his violently pro-Boer people with hard-pressed England's much-maligned cause.

In the long debates on the Address, begun on February 14th and only ended by Closure on February 26th, Opposition was always dangerous on the war. The full case Opposition made against Ministers is, however, best summed up by quoting the widely circulated resolutions adopted, on February 27th, at the annual general meeting of the committee of the National Liberal Federation. They ran thus:¹

That this committee regrets the absence from the King's Speech of any promise seriously to undertake social legislation, and in particular its failure to deal with the admittedly urgent questions of temperance and housing; further, the committee views with grave apprehension the ever-increasing national expenditure; . . .

That this committee records its profound conviction that the long continuance of the deplorable war in South Africa, declared for election-eering purposes to be over last September, is due to the policy of demanding unconditional surrender and to a want of knowledge, foresight and judgement on the part of the Government . . . this committee bitterly laments the slaughter of thousands of brave men on both sides, the terrible loss of life from disease, owing in no small degree to the scandalous inadequacy of sanitary and hospital arrangements provided for our forces, and the enormous waste of resources in actual expenditure upon the war, in the devastation of territory, and in the economic embarrassments which must inevitably follow. . . .

This typical pronouncement, of a "progressive" Opposition was, of course, calculated to throw the blame for every deficiency in peace or war upon the Government. But on one point at least it seemed for a short time that Ministers might strikingly refute Opposition's allegations. On the very day that the Opposition pronouncement was drawn up, Lord Kitchener was meeting General Botha for a consultation on terminating the war. A week's armistice, too, was allowed, so that Botha might consult other leaders. A great deal of the wind would undoubtedly have been taken out of Opposition's sails if Kitchener had succeeded in persuading the Boer leaders that prolonged resistance would only ruin their country without altering the final military result, and that British generosity could be safely relied on, even if he was inviting them to lay down their arms on terms that were virtually

The Times, February 28th.

"unconditional surrender", because they contained none of the guarantees demanded.¹ But the Anglo-Boer negotiations broke down before long, and Government was hindered rather than helped in the work of a Session, made more difficult by extensive Army and Supply business, not to mention the angry "pro-Boer" watchfulness of "extreme Radicals" and the "reunited Irish party's" recovered zest for "obstruction". Typical of Government's troubles was the mere Division of 179-141 by which Ministers procured extra days for Supply on February 27th, and the 122 questions asked of Ministers on February 28th, to the considerable disturbance of the day's time-table. There was more trouble for Ministers on March 4th when Balfour tried to end one possible source of obstruction by altering the rules of the House and depriving members of the right of moving amendments to the motion for going into Committee of Ways and Means. As the House went into this Committee for taxation purposes, the darling privilege of the Commons, Opposition took a high line on this abolition by Government of an immemorial right of the private member and divided at 161 against 255. Next day there was trouble with the Irish party in Committee of Supply on the Education Vote, for after Opposition's complaints on behalf of the London School Board, manacled by the once-famous "Cockerton Judgement", had been rejected in a Division of 117-220, Balfour moved and carried the Closure. Thereupon the "reunited Irish party" claimed that it had been prevented from discussing Irish education and, despite Balfour's assurance that it was intended that Irish Education should be discussed on the Estimates, the Irishmen undertook an "indecent scene", refused to obey the Chair and forced the summons of police and the application of physical compulsion.² This was apparently part of a campaign to convince Ireland, still sparing of political contributions, that it was getting better service from the "reunited Irish party" than any obtained since Parnell's day.³ None the less it compelled Balfour to spend valuable time

¹ *The Times* of March 22nd reported the Boers as accepting annexation "if we guarantee joint education in Dutch and English, liberty to retain sporting rifles, an indemnity of three millions for burnt farms, an amnesty for all belligerents still in the field (including, of course, Cape rebels), and no franchise for natives. . . ."

² *Ibid.*, March 6th.

³ *Ibid.*, April 16th: "People in this country . . . will not, perhaps, be greatly moved by the recent declarations of Mr. Redmond and Mr. Dillon, that the Government is tottering in consequence of the recent operations of the Nationalist party in the House of Commons. . . . Mr. Redmond says the Ministry would in a few months be driven from office."

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amending Standing Orders and making members, who had to be expelled by force, suspensible for the Session.¹

It was amid troublesome preoccupations of this kind that Lord Lansdowne's successor at the War Office, Mr. Brodrick, had to push his scheme of Army expansion and Army Reform. First, Opposition feared, or affected to fear, that voluntary recruiting would never obtain the numbers aimed at, and that the whole plan might be an excuse for conscription; then, the reorganisation of the increased army into six Army Corps, some of them to be kept quickly available as an expeditionary force for foreign service, aroused suspicion that military understandings had been reached with continental powers which were being kept secret from Parliament and the country. And, finally, the cost of the scheme was criticised as alarming and certain to grow. The two leading members of the Front Opposition Bench, both of them Gladstonian anti-Imperialists, were prominent in attempts to arouse popular prejudice against the new proposals. Campbell-Bannerman spoke thus of Army Reform on March 14th:²

There is much shaking of the head just now over the possibility of the exhaustion of our military recruiting resources. By and by there will be much shrugging of shoulders when we are told that that eventuality has actually occurred (Hear, hear). . . . I take exception to the proposals of the right hon. gentleman and of the Government. . . . I hold that no adequate justification has been offered for this new army corps, and I hold that conscription in any form will not be endured by our people (Cheers). . . . What reason did the right hon. gentleman offer for this new army corps for foreign service? He discards the idea that a wise foreign policy may keep us out of trouble. Our neighbours, he says, have an eye to our wealth; the good will and forbearance of foreign powers are a mere quicksand. . . . The right hon. gentleman says: "We cannot suppose that, if we should ever unhappily become entangled in European complications, we could fulfil our engagements to our allies by limiting our operations solely to the action of our Fleet, keeping our soldiers in barracks at home!" What is all this cloudy talk about entanglements and commitments? (Cheers). We have a right to know. . . . Indeed, if I were to guess at what is indicated when we hear of one continent after another where we have great commitments, it is not three but thirteen army corps that would be required (Hear, hear). . . .

And Harcourt, dealing with the financial aspect of the proposals, pointed out that after raising the normal Service Estimates from

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, March 6th, March 7th, etc.

² *The Times*, March 15th.

the 25 millions of 1895 to 60 millions, Ministers were now proposing, apart altogether from war-costs, a further advance to 88 millions, "a thing, I believe, that has never been asked in this country, or any other country before". Moreover, the 88 millions might have to be exceeded because of the need for offering increased pay to attract a sufficiency of recruits, while if the plans to make it possible to send an expeditionary force of 120,000 men abroad meant that the Government had become entangled on the Continent, the figures of 120,000 men and 88 millions would soon be rising. "If you are going to join in the great military combinations of Europe", declared Harcourt amid cheers from those who suspected military conversations with Germany, "you may have to present Estimates for twice or three times £88,000,000."¹

Opposition raised other complaints before the Easter Recess came early in April. Thus Chamberlain was blamed for the breakdown of Kitchener's negotiations with Botha and for Parliament's refusal to hear two Cape Dutch delegates who, according to Opposition, could have offered valuable information at the Bar of the House. Doubts were cast upon the Commission studying future Land-Settlement in the Transvaal and, indeed, innocent as might sound the project of settling ex-soldiers on empty lands in the Transvaal, it was part of a strategic plan for dispersing British colonists throughout rural Transvaal which the Boers were bound to resist.² But Opposition's most promising moments came after the Easter Recess when, on April 18th, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach opened his Budget and asked permission to borrow another sixty millions though he was once again annexing the entire Sinking Fund and adding yet another eleven millions to the country's annual taxation. And if the Chancellor had refused the most dangerous tax-advice offered him by interested Conservative counsellors headed by *The Times*, there was certain to be special trouble about a new tax-programme which asked income-tax payers to find another 2d. in the pound, put ½d. per pound on sugar, and worried the whole coal-trade, from the royalty-owner

¹ *The Times*, March 15th.

² Cf. *Hansard*, March 25th, for the debates on an Opposition motion to reduce the Vote for the Land Commission. The Closure had to be carried by 193-118, and the Opposition amendment was then defeated by the hardly triumphant Division of 196-121. Here may be mentioned that, among other matters raised by the Opposition, was the "unnecessary" Ashanti War of 1900. See for this, and other complaints embracing Uganda, Somaliland and the South Africa Hospitals Commission, *Hansard*, March 18th.

to the pitman, by a coal-export tax of a shilling per ton. Harcourt immediately seized the opportunity to stress the 148 millions the war had cost already, the indefinite bill of further costs still mounting and the allegedly selfish Conservative efforts to place the cost of war upon the poor and, indeed, upon the shoulders of anybody and everybody but the very rich, on the ground that these last were already sufficiently burdened by their poor relations and charitable subscriptions.¹ But, perhaps, on this occasion a quotation from among the Opposition leaders can be foregone in order to permit Broadhurst, their "Labour" supporter, to be heard.

"The statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer",² the House was informed, "was one of the most appalling within his memory, and its effect, he thought, would be most serious. . . . We had entered upon a downgrade the length of which no man could foretell; the rapidity of the descent no man could estimate. . . . The Chancellor of the Exchequer would find that his shipping arrangements for the coal tax would land him in a hornet's nest. . . . The sugar duty would destroy a great industry that had ministered to the wants of the labouring classes to a degree that could never have been foreseen. It was a tax on a class that had not approved or applauded this unholy war and who had paid heavy contributions to the cost in the shape of the lives of those dear to them. Sugar had become almost as much an article of food as breadstuffs, and rather than levy such a tax he would have had 4*d.* added to the income tax, for that would have caused less suffering than this 4*s.* 2*d.* per cwt. on sugar would cause. He would have the tax graduated so that the tax fell heaviest on incomes over £5,000 and the class who had encouraged the war, and many of whom had profited by it. He noticed that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had spared the brewing interest. . . . He regretted that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was silent on a matter to which he called attention last year—namely the unjust incidence of taxation on tea and tobacco. The poor person who consumed low-priced tea and tobaccos paid as much duty as the rich man who bought high-priced. The taxation should be adjusted to the value of the article. He protested against the taxation of such necessities as sugar and coal. . . . The diamond mines of Kimberley, from which ten millions' worth of diamonds were exported yearly, and in the interests of which hundreds of thousands and many lives had been sacrificed, should pay direct and substantial taxation towards the cost of the war. . . ."

Not much can be said here in detail of the troubles which the Budget gave the Government before it was adopted. Opposition's untiring assertions that Ministers, so far from giving working-class families the free breakfast-table, were taxing their sugar and treacle

¹ Cf. *The Times*, April 19th.

² *Ibid.*

directly and their jam and condensed milk indirectly caused Government undoubted and increasing electoral harm.¹ For a time it seemed that the coal-export tax might have worse effects still, for though Ministerialists asserted that the foreigner, dependent on British coal, would pay it, they had formidable trouble to encounter from Conservative royalty-owners, from Liberal export-shippers, and from the Miners' Federation, which last, indeed, not without encouragement from the other two interests, threatened for weeks to organise a nation-wide strike. Perhaps a speech of Mr. Chamberlain's at Birmingham on May 10th will give the most vivid impression of Opposition's revived hopes and Government's embarrassments.

"I want", said the Colonial Secretary,² "to call your attention to the latest development of pro-Boer tactics . . . in the last few weeks there has been a revival of enthusiasm in the many-sectioned Opposition. They fancied that they had their opportunity at last. They fancied that it had come with the Budget (Laughter) . . . you see what the policy of the Opposition is. . . . Harass the Government, oppose everything . . . even in a time of national strife, if not of national danger. . . . Hinder the reforms in the army which at the last election they declared to be the most urgent, oppose the Education Bill—above all, at the present stage oppose the scheme of taxation of the Government to provide for the expenses of a war which they do not approve of but which they dare not oppose. Now how do they present the case to us? . . . You would suppose that this country of ours was on the brink of ruin, that taxation had been strained to the uttermost; and what Sir William Harcourt has to represent to our colonies, who still think we are somebody in the world, and to our rivals, who are only anxious to hear of our downfall—to represent to them that our resources were exhausted, that we had been brought to the edge of a precipice. . . . I believe that these views are inaccurate and that, whether they are accurate or not, it is unpatriotic to express them (Hear, hear). . . .

"We have been called upon, I say, to make sacrifices. Do not let us exaggerate. When every penny of the new taxation has been paid, the United Kingdom will still be in proportion to its wealth the most lightly taxed nation in Europe. . . . This tax upon export coal must fall upon one of two people. It must fall upon the foreigner . . . or upon the coal-owner. . . . Well I do not care which (Laughter and cheers). But the best economic and export authorities tell us it will fall upon the foreigner. . . . We have a monopoly . . . and considering that our supply of this valuable article is limited, considering that enormous quantities—increasingly enormous quantities are every year being sent out to help

¹ Cf. *The Times*, April 25th, for Campbell-Bannerman at the Hotel Cecil.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, May 11th. Chamberlain was addressing the Grand Council of the Liberal-Unionist Association.

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our competitors . . . it is very reasonable that at all events a small tax should be taken upon this export . . . of the capital wealth of the nation (Loud cheers). Then I will take the other view. I will assume for the sake of argument that it does fall upon the coal-owners. . . . Who are these people who complain? . . . They have levied upon the whole people of this country, upon every householder, upon every manufacturer, upon every working man a tax of five shillings or ten shillings a ton and when one-fifth or one-tenth of this is put upon them, they begin to scream (Cheers). . . .”

A quotation of this length from a single speech is justifiable only because it reveals other things than a worried Ministry's angry counter-attack on its unexpectedly numerous Budget opponents. Chamberlain, for example, when scratched by the coal-owners, had displayed enough of the old Radical “Jack Cade” to re-confirm the Carlton Club in its cherished view that there must never, in any circumstances, be the slightest question of a Chamberlain Premiership or even Leadership of the Commons. The speech, again, displays a readiness to find reasons for making “the foreigner pay” which seems prophetic of some aspects of Chamberlain's Tariff Reform agitation of 1903. But, most pertinently for the present purpose, the speech shows that Ministers were worried not merely by the Budget's reception and the Army Reform controversy¹ but also by an Education dispute whose meaning must now be explained. By the “Cockerton Judgement” the Courts had decided that the most ambitious parts of the Day and Evening School systems of the larger School Boards were unwarranted by Education Acts entrusting them merely with “elementary education”. Radicals as the special patrons of the School Boards against “clerical education” demanded, therefore, a new Enabling Act to empower the School Boards to continue teaching even children over 15 in their Higher Grade Schools, and to continue undisturbed also the immense Evening School system of the larger School Boards in which tens of thousands of adults as well as adolescents were enrolled.² Conservatives had no love for “extravagant” School Boards, “recklessly” adding to the rates, or for teachers, anxious for as many Evening School classes as possible because each one represented another opportunity for extra earnings at night. They held, indeed, that the Higher Grade

¹ Cf. *The Times*, May 13th, for this important organ's turning against the Secretary for War's scheme.

² Cf. *Hansard*, July 8th, for Sir John Gorst, giving the last figure of 228,000 enrolments, 108,030 of them in London.

Schools were an unnecessary duplication of the Secondary Schools to which all suitable children could already be sent under the "scholarship" system of the County Council Technical Instruction Committees. The Evening Schools, too, when not extravagantly recreative and social,¹ only competed with the Technical Instruction Schools of the County Council Committees. And if it was urged that the existing provision of Secondary Schools was insufficient in most parts of the country, Conservatives, rather than bestow extra powers on the suspect School Boards, were ready to create County Council Education Committees with powers to provide Secondary Schools and, indeed, to supervise and control all public education within their areas including that of the School Boards. It was this Conservative "enmity" to the School Boards, this desire to restrict, confine and, perhaps, abolish them, that made the "Education struggle" a vigorous one even in 1901. After a "National Conference of Progressive Educationists" had condemned Government's plan in June,² Ministers, with much else of difficulty before them, resolved to postpone their large Education plans for a Session and to pass, meanwhile, a temporary Act "for enabling local authorities to empower School Boards temporarily to carry on certain schools; and for sanctioning certain School Board expenses".

If Army Reform, the Budget and Education represented three aspects of Government policy exposed to Opposition attacks, there were others. On Temperance, Ministers' cool reception of the notion that the time had come to exclude children totally from public-houses provoked some bitter comment. Instead of promoting or helping legislation for such total exclusion, Ministers permitted a private Bill to be watered down until it provided merely for the prohibition of the sale of liquor to children under fourteen, except in "sealed containers". The "Liquor Interest", so important on the Conservative side, had, it was claimed, been allowed, thus meanly, to veil its desire to habituate children to the public-house behind the working man's alleged need to send his child there for his dinner or supper beer. The necessity for renewing the Agricultural Rates Act, first passed in 1896 for a period of five years, brought a revival of all the familiar charges that landlords

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, July 8th, for one case where, according to Sir John Gorst, "there were two kind of dancing taught. . . . The elementary dancing was taught to the sexes separately, and the advanced to the sexes together."

² Cf. *The Times*, June 7th.

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were having a "dole" allowed of half the old rates, and the simultaneous renewal of the Tithe Rent Charge (Rates) Act revived, of course, the complaint against "doles for the Parson". But essentially it was the long dragging-out of the war that made the principal difficulties for Ministers, and how serious those difficulties were may be illustrated from *The Times's* confession after a disappointing by-election that had yielded a conspicuously increased Radical majority. Writing on June 3rd *The Times* frankly owned that Ministers' own supporters were restless and critical.

"It is idle", wrote *The Times*, "to attempt to disguise the fact that there is a great deal of discontent in the ranks of the Unionist majority. It is not by any means confined to the Liberal Unionists, and perhaps its most decided and uncompromising exponents are identified by life-long allegiance to the old Conservative party. The fact remains that the enormous majority which was returned to the House of Commons a few months ago . . . has no excess of faith in its leaders. This feeling is spreading . . . It is true perhaps that the wish of the British Government to keep on friendly terms with Germany has been carried too far. . . . The reconstruction of the Government after the General Election is universally acknowledged to have been inadequate and disappointing."

A particularly troublesome weapon against Government was put into the hands of the "pro-Boers" after Miss Emily Hobhouse returned from a philanthropic mission to South Africa. She had collected disquieting information as to the conditions ruling among the 60,000 Boer women and children, herded into overcrowded and disease-stricken Concentration Camps after their homes had been destroyed in the "farm burning" undertaken by the British troops to deprive their Boer opponents of shelter and sustenance. Despite Government contentions that the Camps were really works of mercy for those who would perish without them, despite the Liberal Imperialists' objections to "unpatriotic" activities on the war, the Concentration Camp agitation, begun in mid-June, enjoyed the steady support of the Opposition Leader himself. Here is Campbell-Bannerman addressing a Peckham audience on August 7th, after the question had been before the country for some weeks:¹

We can see the blunders and miscalculations of the politicians who have controlled events (Cheers). They were surprised when they found that the Boers intended to fight. They were surprised when they found

¹ *The Times*, August 8th.

that they could ride (Laughter and cheers). They were surprised when they found that they could shoot (Laughter). They were surprised when they found that their brethren of the Orange Free State were going to join them (A cry of "Good luck to them" and cheers). . . . And month by month they have been wrong in their estimate of the duration of the war . . . (Loud and continued groans for Chamberlain). . . . I have denounced and, Heaven helping me, will continue to denounce (Loud cheers) all this stupid policy of farm-burning (Cries of "Shame"), devastation, and the sweeping of women and children into camps (Renewed cries of "Shame"). . . . Now we have the Colonial Secretary speaking to us of leniency being regrettable. He says that strong measures will be taken in certain cases. . . . And another thing which is threatened is that the Kaffirs should be used and armed. . . . Therefore a new question arises now. It is no longer a question whether the war was just or unjust, it is a question whether it should be prosecuted at all hazards and by all means. This would mean the extermination of the people against whom we are fighting. I ask you, have the British people for a moment given their sanction to this?

To the "greater public", as distinct from congregations of the Liberal faithful, speeches on the war as querulous and unsympathetic as Campbell-Bannerman's were still very distasteful. The "public" might grumble extensively at Ministers who had had nearly two years and unlimited resources to suppress 60,000 Boers and were still very far from success. But this was the grumbling of men who wanted more vigorous and conclusive fighting to repair Britain's shattered military prestige and who harboured none of the Opposition Leader's doubts about the righteousness of their country's cause or methods. It was just this temper of the "man in the street" which convinced a considerable number of Opposition politicians that Liberal Imperialism under Rosebery, Asquith, Fowler, Grey and Haldane,¹ offered Opposition quicker hopes of displacing the somewhat discredited Salisbury-Balfour combination than Campbell-Bannerman's obvious leanings to "Little Englandism" and the "pro-Boers". Until the spring of 1902, indeed, Rosebery's combination of "democratic Imperialism" abroad and social reform at home threatened continually to give him the succession to the Prime Ministership if a wave of national impatience with the inconclusive war swept away the Salisbury Government. The case Rosebery himself put to the country on July 19th, from the City Liberal Club, was the following:²

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, June 17th, for Haldane's venturing to defend the Concentration Camps in quite bold language.

² *The Times*, July 20th.

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I have no hesitation in stating exactly my view of the war (Hear, hear). My point of departure is that, in spite of the Jameson Raid, in spite of the South African Commission, in spite of clumsy negotiations, the army of the Boers crossed the frontier and invaded the dominions of the Queen. From that moment to this I have had no hesitation about the course that I would take (Cheers). That though I would criticise the methods of the Government when, as so often they have been, they were lamentably short of what the occasion required, yet that in their main issue to carry the war to a triumphal and rapid and quick close, they should have my warmest and most enthusiastic support (Loud cheers). . . .

And after having thus proved himself patriotically sound on the war, Rosebery went on to a biting attack on Ministers' performance and an attractive picture of what a Liberal Government "sound on the question of the Empire" might have done with Government's great majority:

"I do not think," said the ex-Premier, "there is any impartial observer who can remember any Government which, with a large majority or a small majority, has crowded such a frightful assembly of errors, of weaknesses, and of wholesale blunders into its history as this Government has committed (Cheers). . . . And think what these opportunities are which the Government has missed, and you have some measure of the opportunities that are before you now. . . . It might have reformed the House of Lords . . . dealt with the temperance question . . . the housing of the poor. . . . We might have had a great system of education co-ordinated and systematised (Loud cheers). . . . Old age pensions. . . . You start with a clean slate as regards these cumbersome programmes with which you were overloaded in the past. You are disembarrassed from some entangling alliances (Hear, hear). . . . I do not despair of seeing the Liberal party, purged from all anti-national elements and confident, therefore, of the support of the country in regard to Imperial and foreign questions of policy, proceeding in the work of domestic reform. They will have no difficulty with the country on these questions, provided the country feels they are sound on the question of Empire, for the country is ripe for a domestic programme. . . ."

Perhaps the frequent blasts of discontent, blowing upon Government from *The Times* Printing Office during the latter part of 1901, furnish the best evidence today of how a critical war-disaster might have proved fatal to the Salisbury Government and given the "Liberal Imperialists" a chance of determining the character and policy of its successor. The thought of Salisbury's enforced resignation, followed by the constitutional summons of Campbell-Bannerman to the Palace and vain negotiations between

him and Rosebery, allowed the more imaginative to see, it seemed, very clearly how the "Liberal Imperialists" would yet have it in their power to form a Cabinet themselves, possibly on a War-Coalition basis, after Campbell-Bannerman had laid down his hopeless mandate. Here, for example, is one blast from *The Times* of October 5th that could have done Government no good:¹

The defeat of Botha's attempt upon Fort Itala ought normally to have been followed by a hot pursuit of his shattered force, leading to its practical annihilation. But, as a matter of fact, there was no attempt to utilise our victory. . . . That is not war, and it is not business. . . . We hold all the railways, we hold every town and village of any importance, we have over 60 columns in the field, yet the Boers come and go apparently at their own sweet wills. Mr. Stanley Boulter, as a corrective for "the scoldings of the Press" has summarised for us Lord Kitchener's weekly returns for three months. The six thousand Boers removed from the board . . . form a satisfactory item, but a quarter of a million rounds of ammunition are not very impressive, and the 32,161 horses only increase our wonder why horses always seem scarce on our side and plentiful on that of the enemy. . . .

Here, again, is *The Times* of October 7th complaining of the lotus-eating characteristics of the Salisbury Government:²

The majority of Cabinet Ministers are apparently still taking their holidays. The most prominent members of the Government have been almost silent since the end of the Session. . . . That there is a war, which we have to grapple with, and that we have to brace ourselves to grapple with it at once are the plain facts of the situation. The attitude of the Ministry is perplexing and disheartening. . . . The Prime Minister and his colleagues do not seem to feel under any obligation to take counsel as to what is going on in South Africa . . . our Ministers are sitting beside their nectar, as though all were for the best in the best of all conceivable worlds . . . there is much pertinence in Mr. Bowles's reminder, that, in 1855, Lord Palmerston, who was then Prime Minister, "held no fewer than five Cabinet Councils in September, five in October and five in November. . . ."

The Times, of course, did not so much want to bring about a fall of the Conservative Government as to goad it into a more vigorous and successful conduct of the war. Its careful nursing of Lord Rosebery, Mr. Asquith³ and the rest of the "Liberal Imperialists"

¹ *The Times*, October 5th.

² *Ibid.*, October 7th.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, September 30th, for rejoicing over Asquith's declaration: "I hold that in this war we are fighting with clean hands and with clear consciences in a just cause."

was not for the purpose of using them to thrust out Salisbury and Balfour but rather for the purpose of keeping out Campbell-Bannerman and "Little Englandism" when the "swing of the pendulum" or other causes of political mortality should have killed the Salisbury Cabinet. Yet the nature of the writing just quoted from *The Times* should make it plain why, when the year drew towards its close amid more Ministerial mistakes and infelicities, a Rosebery Premiership should seem to be an increasing possibility despite Government's apparent majority of 130. The Cabinet was doing little better with the war;¹ its first three nominations to the new Army Corps Commands were hotly criticised;² and Chamberlain, when defending British military practice in South Africa from continental critics, seemed to have stumbled into a potentially dangerous quarrel with Germany, which held its victorious army of the Franco-German War to have been insulted. Public exasperation with Ministers vented itself for a time in the curious form of agitation on behalf of General Buller, whom Ministers had dismissed shortly after appointing him to an Army Corps Command because of the military impropriety of his conducting a public quarrel with *The Times*.

But if General Buller gained from an angry "public's" disappointment with Government,³ the Opposition leadership did not. The "public" still looked upon Campbell-Bannerman as "pro-Boer" in sympathy, and Chamberlain could still arouse the strongest passions in his audiences by pointing out how "pro-Boer" Little Englanders had spent the last two years condemning their own countrymen and defending the enemy.⁴ And with the

¹ Cf. *The Times*, October 29th: "After two years of effort the war is still dragging on, with no immediate prospect of termination. It is not enough for the Cabinet to give what Lord Kitchener demands. Its duty is actively to press forward everything that may help to end the struggle, and it is of this initiative that the public sees fewer signs than might be desired. . . ."

² Cf. *Ibid.*, October 11th.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, October 29th and 30th and November 2nd.

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, October 26th, for Chamberlain telling a huge Edinburgh audience: "We are unanimously of opinion that this war was forced upon us (Loud cheers) by the insolent ultimatum which was sent by the leaders of the two Republics and by the unprovoked invasion of His Majesty's territories . . . (Cheers). Yet there is a fable, a fable which has been set afloat by those pro-Boer organs whose ingenuity and imagination are never at fault when the question is to belittle and belie their own country . . . that the Boers only anticipated the decision of the Government, that the Government was preparing a declaration of war. . . . The statement is absolutely untrue (Cheers). . . . What are the views of the Opposition? . . . I know perfectly well which is the noisiest section of the party. They are the pro-Boers (Laughter). . . . Now let us see what the pro-Boers say. . . . They tell you that this war is the greatest crime that has

"public" irritated alike by Ministers' shortcomings and the Opposition Leader's lack of forthright "patriotism", the tendency to turn hopefully towards Rosebery certainly grew no less. The steady increase of unemployment, too, as the country descended more deeply into the trough of depression from the boom-conditions of 1895-1900, must have told against Ministers, and so, on the whole, must the Stock Exchange falls resulting from the certainty of another Budget of new taxes, fresh Loans and further Sinking Fund appropriations.¹

It is, perhaps, plainer than it was why singular expectations began to attach themselves even in the first half of November to a speech which Rosebery had undertaken to deliver at Chesterfield on December 16th² and which he desired to have regarded as his programme for a Liberal Cabinet, or indeed, for a Coalition Cabinet if that proved inevitable to end the war. The Liberals were to cut loose from the compromising Irish alliance, which had proved their bane; the party was also to recover its liberty of action in regard to the impossible immensity of the "Newcastle Programme", concentrating instead on education, housing and temperance as prerequisites of "national efficiency"; and the war was to be ended by a mingled display of greater vigour and greater conciliatoriness than had been shown by the Salisbury Government. Some of Rosebery's phrases dominated the political situation for months, the Liberal Party's duty, for example, to "wipe the slate clean" of the errors of the past and the necessity for making "national efficiency" the first care of an energetic and patriotic Government. Rosebery, too, mocked at the suggestion from those who looked purely at the party position in Parliament that "no alternative Government" was possible. It was in this passage, indeed, that he skilfully threw out a feeler to discontented Conservatives and made it plain that he was prepared to lead a Coalition Government.

ever been committed. They never tire of explaining that British statesmen and British administrators, British generals and British soldiers, have descended to the depths of infamy, of cruelty, of dishonesty. . . ."

¹ Cf. *The Times*, November 6th, for the "heavy fall of Consols".

² Cf. *Ibid.*, November 9th, for the pro-Boer South Africa Conciliation Committee also looking forward to the coming "Rosebery speech in the Midlands" because it might precipitate the fall of the Ministers who had made the war. "The Cabinet", claimed the Conciliators ". . . was no longer trusted by anybody—their authority was shaken, and a breath would cause them to crumble into their elements. The Press was looking for a word from a person in the Midlands next month. . . . The Press was hoping he would lead us out of the impasse. . . ."

The War Drags On, 1901

"We are at a great crisis of the nation's history," he declared,¹ "and a crisis that might increase in gravity. Now where, you may ask, do I see the elements of this crisis? To my mind there are three. They are in our foreign relations, they are in the Ministry and they are, of course, in the war . . . there is no parallel to the hatred and ill-will with which we are regarded almost unanimously by the peoples of Europe. . . . I think there could be a longer indictment drawn up against this Government than against almost any Government of which I have any recollection. . . . No alternative Government! No alternative in all Great Britain to this one? The Empire, are we really to believe it, can produce no alternative Government to this? Not out of the Tory party, not out of the Liberal party, not out of both parties, not out of either party is it possible to produce an alternative Government to that which in the opinion of the great mass of the people . . . have greatly mismanaged our affairs (Loud cheers). . . . I, sir, in all my life, from all the bitterest foes of Great Britain, and God knows we have many enough, I have never heard such disparagement . . . (Loud cheers). . . . The nation that cannot produce an alternative to the present Government is more fit to control allotments than an Empire (Loud and prolonged cheering)."

Rosebery, however, needed a critical war-disaster, whether to break up Conservative discipline or induce a Liberal majority, hungry for office, to forswear Campbell-Bannerman's leadership. Even so, a strong Radical band would doubtless have held aloof, refusing to "clean the slate" of Home Rule and the Newcastle Programme, not to mention anti-Jingoism, South Africa Conciliation and "Peace, Retrenchment and Reform". But the critical war-disaster never came and, despite the gossip of a Fleet Street eager for sensation after long months of a dreary and indecisive war, Rosebery was not even fated to displace Campbell-Bannerman in the Liberal leadership. The Boer flag of truce, that came in March 1902, ended at once the possibility of large and immediate political changes.

¹ *The Times*, December 17th.

CHAPTER XIX

END OF THE BOER WAR

"In the opinion of this Congress all taxation on food and industries is a retrograde step, reactionary legislation and unsound fiscal policy, extremely dangerous to the nation's highest interest, and an interference with the doctrines of free trade, which should be resented by the working classes. We further believe the present basis of taxation to be wrong in principle and unsound in policy, inflicting hardships on the working classes. And we call upon the Government to alter this state of things and shift the burden of taxation from those who are to-day unable to bear it, and place it on the shoulders of those who are in a position to pay, in the direction of taxing land-values, mining royalties and incomes on a higher basis."

Resolution of the Trades Union Congress, September 1901.

"And ye vaunted your fathomless power, and ye flaunted your
iron pride,
Ere ye fawned on the Younger Nations for the men who
could shoot and ride!
Then ye returned to your trinkets; then ye contented your
souls
With the flannelled fools at the wicket or the muddled oafs
at the goals.
Given to strong delusion, wholly believing a lie,
Ye saw that the land lay fenceless, and ye let the months go by
Waiting some easy wonder, hoping some saving sign—
Idle—openly idle—in the lee of the forespent Line.
Idle—except for your boasting—and what is your boasting
worth
If ye grudge a year of service to the lordliest life on earth?"

KIPLING'S *Islanders* (1902) demands conscription.

"The Government are taunted, and I am sure it is no business of mine to defend this Government, which is one of the most covert and most mischievous we have had for many years; but when they are taunted with neglecting social reform I submit to you that of all dreams it is the idlest to think that a Cabinet, and a Parliament, and a country plunged into all the embarrassment and entanglement of a prolonged and harassing war—it is idle to dream that they can undertake social reform. . . . I think it will be a fatal mistake if through any desire to pick up a

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Parliamentary majority—as to which I am not very sanguine—you fling your old principles overboard (Hear, hear). It does not strike me as a very prosperous and very promising way of getting a party a Parliamentary majority to quarrel with the Irish, to quarrel with the Labour men, to quarrel with the Radicals. I do not see how a Parliamentary majority is to be collected upon these principles . . .

“(On Home Rule) . . . Is it common sense to be in such a hurry to throw overboard a policy in itself good? Do not forget 1886. In 1886 we were beaten . . . but before many months were over the tide began to turn. We won bye-election after bye-election. . . . Aye but there were giants in those days (Prolonged cheers). . . . There was a leader who appealed to the individual (Hear, hear) . . . to the best elements in him, to the noblest springs of human action (Hear, hear).”

Morley advises opposition to Rosebery, Manchester, March 12, 1902.

IT is doubtful if Government's moral position, so weak with the "public" in December 1901 that Lord Rosebery's Chesterfield speech was widely, if ignorantly, looked to as a signal for Government's dissolution, showed any substantial strengthening for some time. Thus at the opening of the year 1902 another Rosebery speech, which was to be delivered at Glasgow on January 20th, seemed likely to become the theme of almost as much discussion as the Chesterfield oration.¹ On January 2nd, indeed, *The Times* was driven to showing some elation because the rumoured end had not been put to Opposition troubles by an agreement that Rosebery should lead Opposition in the Lords and Campbell-Bannerman in the Commons. Jockeying was undoubtedly going on in Opposition for the right, if there was a Ministerial break-up, of receiving the first summons from the Palace, and Rosebery, as an ex-Premier, would certainly have had the advantage of Campbell-Bannerman had the latter been forced to ask Rosebery's assistance on Rosebery's own terms. *The Times*, indeed, consistently invited Rosebery to insist, as a condition of his co-operation, that Campbell-Bannerman should dissociate himself publicly from "extreme Radical" pro-Boers like Lloyd George who were bringing such "atrocious charges" against Ministers as that they had been responsible for the "killing" of 11,000 Boer children in the South African Concentration Camps.²

Campbell-Bannerman, however, strongly supported by Harcourt, was well aware that his political prospects were brightening rapidly, the more so as the costs of the war were now reaching such totals as to induce even the "City" to think in terms of halting offensive operations over much of the Boer territory outside the Rand and allowing the weary and ruined Boers to take their own time to ask for peace.³ Trade depression, moreover, had already grown acute in Britain; the Trade Unions were appealing to Opposition lawyers for assistance in meeting the menace of the

¹ Cf. *The Times*, January 1st.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, January 7th.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, for the City's statistical oracle, Sir R. Giffen, who wanted "to maintain in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony merely such forces as we require for definite purposes without attempting to extinguish completely all at once, in every corner of the immense region, so-called guerrilla bands. . . . If we confined ourselves mainly to the occupation of the Rand and similar districts, and the revival of the destroyed industries there. . . . It may be doubted whether we can have the numbers necessary at first for less than £20,000,000 or £25,000,000. . . ."

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Taff Vale Judgement; and Conservative opinion was hardening rapidly for demanding a Budget, denounceable by Opposition as both "reactionary" and selfish.¹ Rosebery's name might, indeed, have had an immediate advantage over Campbell-Bannerman's with the non-political "public" and, perhaps, he could hardly have been stopped from becoming a Coalition Prime Minister if the great storm of Anglophobia, aroused in Germany by some phrases in a Chamberlain speech, had added the danger of Anglo-German war to Britain's other trials under the Salisbury Government. But things being what they were, Campbell-Bannerman might conclude that he had only to hang on to his Opposition Leadership to be ultimately floated into power by a tide of "reaction" against Ministers that some were already foreseeing as immense. And quite apart from his personal objections to surrendering to Rosebery, Campbell-Bannerman considered the ex-Premier's desire, at the bidding of *The Times*, to forswear Home Rule and join in the condemnation of "extreme Radical" pro-Boers as short-sighted in the extreme. To antagonise the Irish was hardly the way for Opposition to win Divisions against the Government, and "extreme Radicals" had acquired a Crusading fervour on South African issues that made them Ministers' most persistent and most dangerous foes. When the Opposition Leader addressed a speech to the London Liberal Federation on January 13th, shortly before the opening of Parliament, it certainly seems to have been the "extreme Radicals" who took charge. Though Campbell-Bannerman made friendly references to Rosebery, the audience greeted the ex-Premier's name with hisses and cries of "traitor". And *The Times* noticed that a handbill had been scattered broadcast through the hall, bearing the following appeal:²

Liberals and Radicals beware! A conspiracy is on foot to supplant Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the only Liberal leader, by Lord Rosebery, who forsook the butchered Armenians, opposed Cretan freedom, deserted the Grand Old Man, favoured the Fashoda War Policy against France, supported the South African War, condoned the concentration camps, has repudiated Home Rule for Ireland and who is, therefore, supported by the Tory Press and wealthy classes, by Asquith, "the hero of Featherstone" and Fowler of the National Telephone Company.

¹ Cf. *The Times*, January 9th, for Giffen advocating a reduction of income tax from 1s. 2d. to 6d. and the imposition instead of duties on tea, sugar, corn, timber, petroleum, and beer.

² *Ibid.*, January 14th.

Democrats! Defeat the intrigues of the London drawing-rooms, rally round the old flag, and prevent its capture by the Rosebery-Rhodes clique.

It was the perfect, "extreme Radical" appeal.

After Parliament met on January 16th, the preliminary party demonstrations on the Address were allowed to last until January 29th. Opposition had a flattering Division on an amendment for more Working Class Housing which was only defeated by 153-123,¹ and a Welsh Radical amendment on Local Government for Wales won 117 votes against 164.² On the other hand an Opposition amendment blaming Ministers for a policy that had not conduced to a rapid end of the war failed, despite diplomatic wording, to answer the purposes of its promoters. The Irish refused to support any form of words interpretable as implying support for the war, and so apparently did Lloyd George. Conversely, Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Haldane, the most resolute of the "Liberal Imperialists", declined from "patriotic" motives to vote for an amendment hampering Ministers' conduct of the war. In the consequent thorough defeat of the hostile war amendment by 333 votes against 123,³ Ministers obtained some compensation for a disappointing statement just issued from South Africa and possibly did something temporarily to weaken Campbell-Bannerman's hold on the Opposition Leadership. Certainly a Liverpool speech, that was to be made by the ex-Premier on February 14th, became the occasion for a big attempt by "responsible" Lancashire Liberals to push Rosebery to the front. Nor was the effort likely to suffer from the manner of topic set before Parliament by the Cabinet when the Sessional business proper was begun on January 30th. A London Water Bill denying the London County Council the water powers it claimed and bestowing them instead on a Metropolitan Water Board, constituted more to Ministers' taste; a "Temperance Bill" to deal rather inadequately with the admitted liquor abuses promoted by over-numerous off-licences and so-called "clubs"; and new Procedure rules to permit the Chair and House a wider range of disciplinary powers against deliberately staged "scenes" and to allow, also, of some acceleration in the passage of bitterly contested Bills—these things, important enough in themselves, were hardly likely

¹ *Hansard*, January 17th.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, January 21st.

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to impress the average "man in the street". Nor, it is to be feared, did he grasp the true inwardness of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty announced to the country on February 12th with its implication that the hope of winning German interest for plans of stopping Russian "aggression" in the Far East had been surrendered and another friend obtained.

As the most immediately exciting event, then, to be expected for some time, Lord Rosebery's Liverpool meeting of February 14th had evoked in Lancashire a tremendous demand for seats even at the prices, ranging from 2s. 6d. to 7s. 6d., which the organisers found themselves able to charge without coming near to satisfying the demand.¹ There was, of course, a tremendous outburst of cheering as Rosebery entered the Hall and "an electric light flashed out the words 'Rosebery and Efficiency'". But for all Lancashire's lionising, Rosebery was in a peculiar political position that hardly enabled him to give an epoch-making speech. He loudly praised Mr. Gladstone, Liverpool's most famous son, but pronounced that his Home Rule Bills were dead and buried. He approved Government's negative to a late Dutch approach on behalf of the Boers but found that he himself would not ignore, as Government was proposing to do, the Boer delegates in Europe.² He noticed that Ministers' Anglo-Japanese Treaty was a reversal of the doctrine of "splendid isolation" and criticised their Temperance proposals as lamentably insufficient. And in defending himself against Radical charges that the "clean slate" policy implied, in effect, no policy at all, Rosebery retorted that he did not mean to keep the slate permanently clean but merely to give Liberals a chance of well considering what policy they would write on the slate for the future. There was another hint of Coalition thrown in the Conservative direction by Rosebery's pronouncement that the Irish Question was too big for any one party to deal with and would call for the energy and patriotism of both. Rosebery's main case against Ministers, as it emerged from his speech, was not so much a condemnation of their principles, the really important thing in British politics, as a criticism

¹ Cf. *The Times*, February 15th.

² Rosebery would apparently have been willing, at least, to receive the Boer politicians who had been sent to Europe at the beginning of the struggle in the hope of securing help or intervention. Ministers would only sanction negotiations between the Boers, still in the field, and Lord Kitchener, these to be avowedly on the basis of surrender.

of the inefficiency of their methods. According to Rosebery, Ministers not only lacked a positive executive efficiency but:

We have had some glaring instances on the negative side of efficiency in the last few days. We have had a reversal of policy . . . with regard to Wei-hai-wei. . . . Then there has been a reversal of policy in Malta. . . . We have had some idea of the efficiency of the Government in their business relations with the telephone, with their meat contracts, and with their horse contracts (Cheers) . . . if the Government are honest in saying they wish for an inquiry and investigation, let us have it at once . . .

For Rosebery to confine immediate Liberal policy to the "clean slate" and some exploitation of a couple of minor "scandals" was, of course, to deliver himself into Campbell-Bannerman's hands. That politician had no difficulty in carrying the great majority of the party stalwarts, assembled at Leicester on February 19th as the Committee of the National Liberal Federation, for a policy much more resolutely Radical than Rosebery's.¹ Campbell-Bannerman roundly condemned Government's alleged refusal to treat with the Boers except on the basis of "Unconditional Surrender"; and he apparently demanded an Amnesty for all in the Boer ranks though these contained some Cape "traitors" and others whom Ministers wished to except because of "crimes" like the alleged "murder" or torture of pro-British Kaffirs. And apart from taking the strong Radical line on pacification in South Africa, Campbell-Bannerman delighted the party stalwarts by uncompromising declarations on other subjects. Criticising the "clean slate", Campbell-Bannerman talked with pride of the "cupboardful" of Liberal measures left behind in 1895 and apparently to form the immediate legislative programme of any future Liberal Government. On Irish matters, too, Campbell-Bannerman did not confine himself to condemnation of the Crimes Act, lately resuscitated to permit Irish politicians to be tried and condemned once more, without a jury, for encouraging boycotting and similar agrarian offences. He roundly proclaimed his continued adherence to Home Rule.

Campbell-Bannerman's speech was possibly intended to drive Rosebery out of the party. If it did not do that, it certainly produced from the angry ex-Premier a declaration of his "definite separation" from the politician who "speaking pontifically within his tabernacle" had anathematised the Rosebery declarations on

¹ *The Times*, February 20th.

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the "clean slate" and Home Rule.¹ A "Liberal League" was soon set on foot by Rosebery's partisans, which, if never seriously challenging the authority of the National Liberal Federation, remained, with four such Vice-Presidents as Asquith, Fowler, Grey and Haldane, an organisation capable, in favourable circumstances, of making a fight for a Rosebery Leadership. It is a mark of Government's immense loss of credit that these Opposition divisions, instead of lessening the "public's" attention to attacks upon the Ministers, merely provided them with a double set of indictments to study. When, for example, another severe British reverse was reported on March 7th,² it only added to the interest taken in a Rosebery speech delivered at Glasgow on March 10th and a Morley speech, delivered at Manchester, on March 12th, from a very different Opposition angle.

On March 23rd the war-situation began to lose its most critical aspects for Ministers, for on that day the Boer "Government" of the Transvaal arrived at Pretoria under a flag of truce and with a request to be permitted to consult with President Steyn of the Free State. It was plain that the Boers were preparing to parley on the basis of recognition of the British annexation and, doubtless, hoped to improve their terms by offering Ministers the chance of proclaiming the return of peace before the coronation of Edward VII, fixed for June 26th. The Peace of Vereeniging, signed at 10.30 p.m. on May 31st was not, of course, reached without long hesitations among the Boers themselves, some of whom apparently urged the continuation of the struggle to the bitter end. Ministers appear to have had some anxious moments before May 31st, and this doubtless contributed to the very liberal terms they finally conceded the Boers, terms that included the promise of a free grant of £3,000,000 to assist Boer resettlement with millions more available as interest-free loan for two years and bearing three per cent afterwards.³ Ministers, it should be remembered, had had ample proof of Boer obstinacy and knew very well that the Boers were still capable of several months of military resistance. The hope once entertained by Chamberlain and Milner of unconditional surrender had had, in fact, to be abandoned not merely because of

¹ *The Times* of February 21st printed the announcement in the shape of a letter received from Rosebery.

² Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1903, p. 379, for the "severe defeat" inflicted by Delarey on Lord Methuen, who was himself captured.

³ Cf. S. H. Jeyes, *Mr. Chamberlain*, p. 550.

Opposition's agitation but because Kitchener had military, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer financial, objections to several months more of fighting. Even as it was, the war had already cost £222,974,000 and could not be wound up without the expenditure of many millions more, not to mention financial anxieties for the Chancellor possibly greater even than those he was experiencing in carrying the Budget he had proposed on April 14th

Before dealing in detail with Government's troubles on the Budget of 1902, it is worth observing that Ministers early had good reason to believe that their Education Bill of the Session might give them even greater anxiety. Mr. Balfour, indeed, had scarcely introduced the Bill on March 24th than "old Parliamentary hands" were reported as "already predicting disaster or abandonment"¹ of so controversial a measure for the abolition of the School Boards, and the "putting of the Church Schools upon the rates". As *The Times* archly said on March 28th, after the National Education Association and the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches had issued prompt condemnations of the Bill:

From the stalwarts of extreme Radicalism and of militant Non-conformity, as well as from thick and thin upholders of the School Board system, uncompromising resistance is to be expected . . . the militant anti-denominationalist is already rising in his strength. He does not mean to be taken in by Mr. Balfour's smooth phrases: for he knows—a great deal better, perhaps, than Mr. Balfour himself—that the underlying motive of the whole Bill is the perpetuation of clerical ascendancy. . . . They hanker after an authority especially elected *ad hoc*—i.e. a sort of glorified School Board. . . .

Obviously the Education Bill of 1902 was no light one for a somewhat discredited Government to introduce and to resolve to carry. But it is time to turn to the Budget, for the Education Bill will receive special treatment.

For years there had been a loud demand from interested quarters that the precious opportunity of a great Conservative majority should not be wasted, but should be fully utilised in order to effect "salutary" changes in the nation's system of taxation. During the mid-Victorian age, it was claimed, many articles of consumption had been freed from taxation without necessity and almost without demand, and the result had been that Britain's indirect taxation was obtained from a mere handful of articles.

¹ Cf. *The Times*, March 26th.

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These articles were not only apt to become overtaxed and yield a dangerously inelastic revenue but the ridiculous smallness of their numbers meant that the income-tax payer was left to bear the brunt of every new burden to a most unwise and unjust degree. The Boer War, for example, after raising Income Tax a first time from 8*d.* to 1*s.* and a second time from 1*s.* to 1*s.* 2*d.* might, if the Treasury were allowed to proceed along the path of least resistance, yet force it beyond the record level of 1*s.* 4*d.* reached during the Crimean War. But, in the nation's own ultimate interest, it was necessary, it was claimed, to prevent this, to call a halt and, finally, with the aid of new indirect taxes, resuscitated from the mid-Victorian era, to commence a downward revision of income tax to the "healthy" level of, perhaps, 6*d.* in the pound.

Though resisting and criticising the "City's" point of view, as pressed upon him by *The Times*, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach had already yielded considerably. Thus the first increase of Income Tax (and stamp duties) in the Budget of March 1900 had been accompanied not only by higher Beer and Tobacco duties but by an increase of the Tea Duty from 4*d.* to 6*d.* a pound.¹ The second increase of Income Tax, undertaken in the Budget of April 1901, was accompanied by the reimposition of the sugar duties and the placing of the export duty upon coal and coke. As Political Economy had declared the unwisdom of Export Duties for a very long time and sugar-taxation involved the adding to the British tariff list of a long list of sugar-containing articles from Candied Peel, Confectionery and Preserved Fruits to Jams, Marmalade and Condensed Milk. Opposition found the Budget of 1901 singularly easy to attack. Yet in January 1902, at the very time, doubtless, when Hicks-Beach had begun considering his next Budget, he found *The Times* pressing him to adopt a taxation-programme, drafted by the City's statistical expert, Giffen, and calculated to destroy the strongest Government. Giffen shall be allowed to summarise his own proposals as he communicated them to *The Times*:²

"The aim", said Giffen, "should be, I believe, to reduce the income tax from 1*s.* 2*d.* to 6*d.* per pound, still rather a high rate for peace-time,

¹ *Hansard*, March 5th, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach.

² *The Times*, January 9th. It may be added that Giffen favoured also, in the event of an aggravated armaments race among the Great Powers, the reclaiming by the Treasury of the twenty millions per annum going from the Exchequer to the local authorities.

which would mean a sacrifice of twenty million sterling, besides making provision for a deficit of £10,000,000—a total of £30,000,000 in new taxes. . . . There should be no real difficulty in providing the necessary taxes. We have only to go back to a date just before those wanton sacrifices of indirect revenue began which have ended in our present difficulties. . . . What is needful, in order that the country's finance may have indispensable strength, is substantially to undo the remissions of indirect taxation which have taken place since 1874, or from shortly before that date. . . . It may not be expedient to reimpose the identical duties. . . . Probably it would be found that 3*d.* additional per lb. on tea; an additional $\frac{1}{2}$ *d.* per lb. on sugar; 1*s.* per qr. on grain; 1*s.* per load on timber, 1*d.* per gallon on petroleum and an additional 3*s.* per barrel on beer would yield the £20,000,000 required without affecting the consumption of the people. . . .”

Though Sir Michael Hicks-Beach objected publicly to some of the advice here pressed upon him, it none the less exercised an effect. When opening his Budget on April 14th the Chancellor, indeed, only ventured to propose £5,150,000 of new taxation to meet an estimated deficit of 45½ millions, looking for the remainder to a Loan and a raid on the Sinking Fund. But it is significant that more than half of Sir Michael's new taxation was to be obtained from what the Opposition promptly and gleefully styled the “bread-tax”—a tax of 3*d.* per cwt. on imported grain and 5*d.* per cwt. on imported flour and meal. This “bread-tax” enabled Sir Michael to avoid flying direct in the face of the City and allowed him to ask only 1*s.* 3*d.* as Income Tax instead of the 1*s.* 4*d.* or more that might have been otherwise required. This raising of the Income Tax by only 1*d.* was to be further facilitated by a proposed doubling of the “stamp duties” on dividend warrants and cheques though, to be sure, “men of business” complained so loudly of the impolicy of requiring a 2*d.* stamp on the small cheques that made up the great majority of those handled in commerce that the 2*d.* cheque-stamp was soon perforce abandoned.¹ The abandonment of the 2*d.* cheque-stamp, after some vain consideration of the possibility of requiring it, instead of the 1*d.* stamp, for all cheques above a certain value, left the Chancellor free from the grumbling of the Banks and of Business and able to concentrate his attention upon Opposition's joyful and confident clamour against the “bread-tax”. Against the “bread-tax”, indeed, Liberal Imperialists had raised their voices as loudly and as menacingly as “extreme

¹ *Hansard*, May 12th, for Sir Michael Hicks-Beach surrendering the extra 1*d.* on cheques when speaking on the Second Reading of the Finance Bill.

Radicals". Here, for example, is how Sir Henry Fowler spoke on the subject despite vehement assertions to the contrary from the comparatively new Scottish-Canadian member, Bonar Law,¹ Glasgow iron-merchant and winner of a Glasgow seat from Opposition in 1900.²

"I say", said Fowler on April 22nd, "that a bread-tax should be left to the last (Cheers) . . . this is about the meanest tax I have ever heard of for a nation which has the boundless wealth of Great Britain (Cheers). We know from the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget that within the last two financial years the estates of people who have died in this country have been valued at £520,000,000. We know, too, that a penny on the income tax produces £2,600,000, and the nation in order to get £2,600,000 ought not to dislocate a trade, ought not to break down a great principle. . . . Do not tax necessities. Tax luxuries. If the choice is between bread and tobacco, I say tax tobacco. If the choice is between bread and beer, I say tax beer. If the choice is between bread and the income tax, I say increase the income tax (Loud cheers)."

From the very opening stages of the Corn and Grain Duty discussions, therefore, Opposition was not only united but dangerous. Ministers could only Close the preliminary debate of April 22nd by a vote of 285-195 and their resolution was subsequently carried by no more than 283 votes against 197. Steps were, of course, taken to secure an improvement upon these figures when the Finance Bill should be at its Second Reading stage in May but, meanwhile, the Opposition was much encouraged by a remarkable by-election victory at Bury³ and the combative ardour displayed by local party organisations, roused by the "bread tax" and the "iniquitous Education Bill".⁴ When, therefore, the Corn Duty was debated again at the Finance Bill's Second Reading

¹ Cf. *The Times*, April 23rd, which reports Bonar Law thus: "Hon. gentlemen opposite tried to imagine they were going to raise the country by this old agitation (Opposition cheers). The conditions had changed, and such an agitation was now impossible. It was not a real agitation: it would deceive nobody, it would excite no one (Cheers)." Bonar Law became Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade when Salisbury's Government was reconstructed by Balfour in July 1902.

² *Ibid.*

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, May 12th. The voting had been 4,213 for the Opposition candidate against 3,799 for the candidate of Government, a very different result from the 849 majority obtained by the Government candidate in 1900. The victorious politician was editor of the *Preston Guardian* and averred "they had not made the corn-tax a mere party cry. It was a real one."

⁴ Cf. *The Times*, May 13th, according to which 2,700 delegates had been appointed to attend the twenty-fourth annual meeting of the Council of the National Liberal Federation. This was above the average of the past ten years.

stage, taken between May 12th and May 14th, Campbell-Bannerman accused Ministers of being engaged in a deep plot against Free Trade and on behalf of Imperial Preference. He doubtless suspected that pressure from Chamberlain had had something to do with the appearance of the Corn Duty in the Budget and guessed that the approaching Colonial Conference, timed for the June Coronation season, might find Chamberlain offering the Colonies an early remission of the Corn Duty in exchange for Preferential Tariffs on British Goods. Chamberlain can hardly be said to have allayed Opposition suspicions by a speech he made at Birmingham on May 16th, for in it may be seen in embryo the Tariff Reform campaign of 1903. There was another considerable struggle, therefore, on the Committee stage of the Finance Bill in June, and Opposition's attempt to fix August 1, 1903, as the day for the return of Free Trade in the "people's food" was only defeated by 236 votes against 173.¹

Alongside the corn-tax struggle Opposition had been conducting another against the Government on the subject of the Education Bill. The principal objection Opposition and Nonconformity urged against the Bill was the great financial aid it proposed to give the Church Schools by putting their teachers' salaries upon the rates.² Other objections were, of course, loudly urged. Many disliked the notion of abolishing the larger School Boards which had aroused genuine loyalty by the great educational services they had rendered since 1870 in their Board Schools. It was felt that the suggested County Council Education Committees would never bring the same zeal to popular education that had been brought by bodies specifically elected for the purpose. Government, of course, claimed great things for the educational systematisation that would become possible when a County or County Borough Education Committee took over the School Board's responsibilities, received large jurisdiction over the hitherto competing Church Schools and resolved to put into execution the varied powers conferred by the Bill in regard to Secondary Schools, Training Colleges and even Universities. It was this proposed approach to

¹ *Hansard*, June 9th.

² Technically speaking the term "Voluntary Schools" should have been used instead of Church Schools. But it was the Church of England National Schools which formed the great majority of the "Voluntary Schools" though Catholic Schools, unlike those of other denominations who preferred the Board School system, had been growing steadily in number for many years.

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“systematic” legislation which attracted men like the Fabians and Mr. Haldane. But popular sentiment was swayed by very different considerations as Lord Rosebery knew when, after receiving an enthusiastic reception, graced by a torchlight procession, he addressed a Leeds meeting on May 30th. Leeds was proud of its School Board, he claimed, and wanted to keep it with its 55,000 children and 2,000 staff. The Education Bill, transferring from ecclesiastical managers to the Leeds ratepayer unwelcome and unwanted burdens, would cost him an extra rate of 6*d.* in the pound and would force him to economies harmful to the high standards hitherto attained in the Board Schools.

But perhaps an extract from the speech Lloyd George had delivered on May 8th, when opposing the Second Reading of the Education Bill, will epitomise best the anti-Church rancour which animated the most effective Nonconformist opposition to the Bill. Lloyd George gave voice to all the old resentments felt at the privileged position and revenues enjoyed by the Church; he expressed all the old fury at the reinforcement that had been given to the Church’s “unjust” privileges by the great educational subventions which the State had allowed it; and finally his speech revealed the devastating social jealousies fomented by the advantages which “Church” enjoyed over “Chapel” in obtaining for the child of the “respectable working man” and of the small farmer or tradesman entry into the training college first, and a teaching post afterwards. Here is a most characteristic passage from Lloyd George’s speech:¹

The Church had over 12,000 schools in the country, which were mission rooms to educate the children of the poor in the principles of the Church. In 8,000 parishes there were no other schools, and the whole machinery of the law was there utilised to force the Nonconformist children into them. Another advantage possessed by the Church was the patronage of 60,000 excellent appointments in the Civil Service. (Teachers and caretakers’ posts?) . . . There were about 2,000,000 children in the Anglican schools and 1,000,000 of them were Nonconformists, and yet Nonconformists were not allowed to enter the teaching profession except on condition of becoming members of the Church of England or attending the services of the Church. . . . Another advantage to the Church in the present state of things consisted in the influence and position which came from having the complete control of the most important communal institution in 5,000 parishes in the country. (The school buildings?) What did Church people give for all

¹ *The Times*, May 9th.

these advantages? They gave £650,000 a year as against £4,000,000 which came from the State. Taking their own claim as to the number of adherents of their Church, their contribution was exactly a farthing a head per week per adult (Cheers). They complained that they would have to maintain the repairs of the school buildings. The cost of that would come to about £60,000 a year at the very outside, or one-tenth of a farthing a week for every adult member of the Church of England—one-fifth of the widow's mite and dukes grumbled at it (Cheers and laughter). There was no coin of the realm insignificant enough to mark the *maximum* of sacrifice which these fearless religious zealots were prepared to make for their faith (Renewed cheers). . . . To his Irish friends he said he deplored their decision to support this Bill. It was not a Bill for teaching children the religion of their parents but a Bill for riveting the clerical yoke on thousands of parishes in England (Hear, hear). The men who proposed the Bill were the bitterest enemies of Ireland, and those who were opposing it were the best friends Ireland had got (Cheers). Why was it that he and his friends in opposing the Bill were an impotent minority? Was it because the people of England were against them? He believed that the people of this country were as resolute as ever against the clerical yoke (Hear, hear). They were in a minority because they had committed themselves to the cause of Ireland. . . .

A number of things, of course, stand out from such a speech as Lloyd George's besides the fact that he had already discovered that Dukes made excellent material for "extreme Radical" jeering. Despite the Conservatives' revival of the Crimes Act, the Irish party, now as always at the disposal of the Irish Catholic hierarchy, had decided to support the Government Education Bill because it promised to help the Catholic hierarchy of England by reducing the costs of the Catholic community's now very large number of "Voluntary Schools". But though Irish support for the Education Bill enabled Government to carry the Second Reading by a majority of 402 against 165 (May 8th), the tone of Lloyd George's speech is sufficient indication of the bitterness with which it was being fought in the name of Nonconformity. Indeed, such leading Nonconformists as Dr. Clifford had already adopted the resolution of allowing themselves to be distrained upon rather than pay the Church-assisting Education rate of the future. A fierce and protracted struggle, therefore, opened in Committee and seems not to have been affected in the slightest by the restoration of peace, the enforced postponement of the Coronation or the retirement of Lord Salisbury and the consequent reconstruction of the Government under Mr. Balfour. Indeed, when the Commons adjourned

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on August 8th, the day before that fixed for the postponed Coronation, a large part of the Education Bill was not yet through Committee. Of a Bill of twenty clauses only seven had yet been disposed of,¹ and Opposition's fight, loudly encouraged, outside Parliament, by Nonconformity and friends of the School Boards, appeared to be growing more obstinate rather than less. It seemed certain that when the Session was resumed on October 16th Opposition, refreshed by the adjournment, would continue a Parliamentary struggle that had already put Ministers into repeated difficulties. If some of Government's clerical friends had seen reason for anxiety in Ministers' tendency to make "dangerous" concessions to Opposition's demands for large representation of the "public" in the Managements of their schools, another class of Government friends had had to submit to a different type of disappointment. There were those on the Government Benches who had regarded the Education Bill as a means of transferring to the public charge, Church School expenses that incomes, depleted by the fall of agricultural rents, could no longer carry. They regarded even much of "Board School" education as an extravagance, and now they found Government, in the effort to render the County Education Committees more attractive to Opposition, consenting to make the exercise of the Committees' "Higher Education" powers not optional but compulsory. Those squires, who feared that the "Higher Education" rate would quickly be pressed over the 2*d.* limit, set as the rule in 1902, were wise in their generation.²

Meanwhile the reconstruction of the Government, that had followed the sick Salisbury's retirement on July 11th, had done little to restore confidence in an Administration bearing so much of the responsibility for the unfortunate conduct of the Boer War. Even among Conservatives there was no particular elation that Balfour should have succeeded his uncle or that Ritchie should have gone over from the Home Office to the Exchequer in succession to Sir Michael Hicks-Beach who had insisted on

¹ *The Times*, August 8th.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, June 24th, for Major Rasch, the outspoken Conservative M.P. for Mid-Essex, on the original use of "may" instead of "shall" in Clause 2, providing for the Education Committees' help for Higher Education: "There were those who thought that this word 'may' was the one thing that made the Bill worth the paper it was written on. (Laughter.) . . . At any rate it was the one thing that stood between the agricultural interest and the profuse expenditure of educational zealots. . . ."

retiring together with his chief. The resignation of the two elder Conservative statesmen, who were known to have acted as considerable brakes on Chamberlain's masterfulness, appeared certain to establish the Liberal-Unionist as the dominating force in the Ministry, and the promotion of his son Austen to sit beside him in the Cabinet increased the distaste of some Conservatives for Government arrangements already too nepotistic in flavour.¹ Nor were Conservative critics of Mr. Chamberlain, always present in the inner counsels of the party, satisfied that he should always seem to be taking the centre of the stage at the expense of his nominal chief. Whether it was the Conferences with Colonial Premiers for which the Coronation season had given the opportunity² or interviews with Boer generals, come to win new concessions for their people, it was always the Colonial Secretary who seemed to seize the limelight.³ When the adjourned Parliamentary Session was about to be resumed, it was he who informed the nation on October 9th that the Education Bill would not, despite the ever-growing Nonconformist resistance, be abandoned, but would be pressed to a conclusion.

Perhaps the Colonial Secretary's Conservative critics will be best understood if the *Whitaker's Almanack* list of "Remarkable Occurrences, etc., 1902" is quoted for all mention of Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Balfour, say, between October 27th and November 25th. Here is what *Whitaker's Almanack* gave:⁴

October 27th. It was announced that Mr. Chamberlain would personally visit the South African Colonies "to examine on the spot the problems presented by the termination of the war and the state of affairs in the new colonies". It was decided that the Colonial Secretary should proceed on his journey in the new cruiser *Good Hope*—the vessel contributed to the Empire by the Cape Colony in 1897.

November 3rd. The results of the conferences held between Mr. Chamberlain and the Colonial Premiers were announced. The following is a brief summary of the main points agreed upon as desirable for the strengthening of the Empire: That similar conferences should be held every four years; that the views of any Colonies affected by any proposed treaty with foreign Powers should be ascertained; that Australia,

¹ In the fact that a nephew had succeeded an uncle as Prime Minister and had his brother, Gerald Balfour, beside him in the Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade. Austen Chamberlain's place was Postmaster-General.

² Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1903, under June 30, July 4, August 1, and August 11, 1902 ("Remarkable Occurrences" section).

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, under September 5th: "Mr. Chamberlain conferred with the Boer generals at the Colonial Office. . . ."

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

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New Zealand, Cape Colony, Natal and Newfoundland should increase their contributions towards the Navy; that greater facilities should be afforded to young colonials who might wish to obtain commissions . . . ; that the principle of preferential trade between Great Britain and the overseas dominions would stimulate and facilitate mutual commercial intercourse, though any hard and fast rules were at present impracticable; that, in view of the great extension of foreign subsidies to shipping, it was desirable that the position of the mail services between different parts of the Empire should be reviewed. . . .

November 9th. Birthday of His Majesty the King. The party assembled at Sandringham included the German Emperor, Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain.

November 10th. The Lord Mayor's "Show" was held, the 9th falling on a Sunday. At the Guildhall banquet, in the evening, Mr. Balfour eulogised Mr. Chamberlain's administration of the Colonial Office.

November 11th. Mr. Chamberlain held a private interview with the Boer Generals Botha and Delarey.

November 17th. Mr. Chamberlain was entertained at a farewell banquet in Birmingham by citizens of all political opinions on the occasion of his approaching visit to South Africa.

November 25th. The Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies, left England on the cruiser *Good Hope* for South Africa.

If it is not difficult to gather from the above quotations what were the objections of many Conservatives to Mr. Chamberlain's over-prominence, it is essential to remember that Opposition was not without its profit thereby. Thus, the formal adoption by the Colonial Conference of Imperial Preference as a desideratum seemed to justify all the Opposition's forebodings at the time the "bread-tax" was imposed that the nation was face to face with a plot to cajole and jockey it out of "Free Trade". The semi-suggestion of special measures on behalf of British shipping, or at least that part of it engaged in the carriage of inter-Imperial mails, seemed to suggest the possibility of a revival of some form of Navigation legislation. Yet Ministers had already, it was alleged, fallen into the most obvious traps of home and foreign "Shipping Rings" when negotiating a late arrangement on transatlantic mail-services with the Cunard Company and the American Shipping "King", Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan.¹ Indeed, the current

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, April 24th, April 28th, May 16th, May 28th, July 8th for the agitation caused by the successful Morgan flotation of the International Mercantile Marine Co. which had taken over the White Star, the Leyland, the Dominion and the British and North Atlantic Companies. Government, for example, had had to promise an immediate inquiry into the subventions allowed such companies for rights over their ships in war-time.

American agitation against that plunder of consumers by Trusts and Rings, alleged by Free Traders to be promoted by Protection, was destined before long to work not only for President Theodore Roosevelt but for the British Opposition.¹ Meanwhile Opposition had returned to Westminster on October 16th in the firm resolve to exhaust every legitimate method of delaying the adoption of Government's Education Bill. "Extreme Radicals" returned with special confidence that the political tide was turning in their favour, and they did not base their conviction solely on the feeling that had been excited against the Education Bill and against Ministers' revival of "food-taxes" at a time of steadily growing distress and unemployment. The end of hostilities had permitted some astonishing revulsions of war-sentiment as had already been shown in the enthusiastic welcome accorded Boer generals in the London streets.² Opposition seemed bound to gain from this revulsion of feeling especially when the expected proofs of war-slackness and mismanagement were obtained from the Commission of Inquiry that the Government had been pledged to set up when fighting was over.³ Meanwhile the vigorous "Labour" effort to secure the legislative reversal of the law expounded in the Taff Vale Judgement was offering Opposition unique chances of capturing the Trade Union vote and alliance.⁴

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1904, p. 386, for Roosevelt's "trust-busting" message to Congress of December 2, 1902.

² Cf. S. H. Jeyes, *Mr. Chamberlain*, p. 647, for the "gushing adulation by the politicians of the pavement" bestowed on Generals Botha, De Wet and Delarey who had come to Europe in August in order to win further concessions for the Boers.

³ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1903, p. 383, under October 7, 1902: "The War Inquiry Commission held its first sitting. As the Commission sits with closed doors, the public will only be afforded an official report of the deliberations."

⁴ Cf. *Hansard*, May 15th, for Opposition's first big effort on behalf of the Trade Unions on a motion "That legislation is necessary to prevent workmen being placed by judge-made law in a position inferior to that intended by Parliament in 1875." The debate was only Closed by a vote of 199-177 and a Conservative amendment carried by one of 203-174. Opposition followed this up in August by allowing D. J. Shackleton of the Northern Counties Weavers' Amalgamation to become M.P. for Clitheroe as both the Liberal and "Labour" candidate.

CHAPTER XX

RISE OF THE FISCAL CONTROVERSY, 1903

“EMPLOYMENT AND EMPIRE (as explained at Glasgow and Greenock).

The objects which have induced Mr. Chamberlain to propose revision of fiscal policy are these:

1. To bind the Colonies closer to the Mother Country, to build up a self-contained and self-sustaining Empire. We are to give the Colonies the right to send foodstuffs into our markets free, while the foreigner pays a small duty. In return, the Colonies will allow our manufactured goods to enter their markets at lower rates than the foreigners' goods.

2. To secure the continuance of employment for the workmen of Britain by protecting our industries from unfair foreign competition. When foreign nations keep out British manufactures by high tariffs we shall put duties on the manufactured goods they send to this country, amounting, on the average, to 10 per cent.

NEW DUTIES

On foreign grains (except maize)	.	2s. per qr.
On foreign meat (except bacon)	. . .	5 per cent
On foreign dairy produce	. . .	5 per cent

DUTIES TO BE TAKEN OFF

Tea	4½d. per lb.
Sugar	Half duty
Coffee	Half duty
Cocoa	Half duty

FOREIGN MANUFACTURES

Duty on foreign manufactured goods	.	10 per cent
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HOUSEHOLD BALANCE SHEET

Mr. Chamberlain estimates that the working man will get his food cheaper by the shifting of the duties from tea, sugar, coffee, and cocoa, to bread, meat, and dairy produce, and that the weekly balance sheet of a family will work out as follows in farthings:

Agricultural labourers:	Loss 9½; Gain 17; Net Gain 7½
Town artisan:	Loss 10; Gain 19½; Net Gain 9½

NATIONAL BALANCE SHEET

Revenue on foreign manufactures	.	£9,000,000
Loss by readjustment of food taxes	.	£2,800,000
		<hr/>
Net gain to exchequer	.	£6,200,000
		<hr/>

Part of this balance would be used to reduce more of the duties on food, and other taxes which are burdensome."

From the *Daily Mail Year Book*, 1904.

Opposition replies.

Mr. Haldane, October 5th. "German trade with the United States has gone up 34 per cent between 1898 (Dingley Tariff) and 1902, while British trade has gone up no less than 60 per cent. . . . Taking the whole protected countries together, British trade has gone up 18 per cent as against the German 10 per cent."

Mr. Asquith, October 24th. "If the colonies were asking—which I do not believe for a moment they are—that I should assent to a scheme which would increase the cost of bread and meat in every household in Great Britain, I should say—'You are asking too much.'"

Lord Rosebery, November 7th. "You cannot have Protection limited. You cannot fix bounds to it. The 10 per cent this year, if trade slackens, becomes 20 per cent. It grows by leaps and bounds. Under the baleful shadow of Protection grows up every form of interest and every species of corruption."

OF the long struggle on the Education Bill, waged in the Commons after Parliament reassembled on October 16th, it is perhaps hardly wise to give many details. Suffice it to say that Opposition saw reason for violent objection to nearly all the principal clauses. Though the former Church schools, for example, were now to be maintained by the local education authority, its control over the staffing of these schools by the majority Church Managers was obviously to be nominal.¹ And if some compensation for this was offered by Government when apparently increasing the control of the education authority over the secular instruction and the state of the school buildings, these alleged concessions, too, were open to the objection that the last word in any dispute between Managers and the authority was reserved to Government's Board of Education. It was to the suspect Board, too, that was reserved the decision whether new "voluntary schools", promoted by alleged "clerical machination" were to be "foisted on" to the rates for 100 per cent maintenance, and, truth to tell, this provision has largely profited one set of denominational schools at least—the Catholic. And while all existing "voluntary schools" with an average attendance of over thirty were specifically safeguarded from classification as "unnecessary", power was most "undemocratically" reserved to the Board to treat proposed new Council schools as "unnecessary" on the appeal of ten local ratepayers or the Managers of an affected "voluntary school".²

When the Education Bill was at last ready for the Statute Book on December 17th, it was accompanied by what was, according to Opposition, another "undemocratic" measure, the London Water Bill. The long attempt by the Radical "Progressives" of the London County Council to acquire the Water powers, allowed to the municipal authorities of so many other cities, had been finally beaten, and a Metropolitan Water Board of Conservative design imposed on London in defiance, it was claimed, of the wishes of its inhabitants who had given a particularly large majority in March 1901 to the "Progressive" party.³ But the closing Parliamentary

¹ Cf. Clause 8: "The consent of the local education authority shall be required to the appointment of teachers, but that consent shall not be withheld except on educational grounds."

² Cf. Clause 9 and Clause 10 which last opens thus: "The Board of Education shall determine, in case of dispute, whether a school is necessary or not. . . ."

³ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1902, pp. 352-4.

stages of both Bills were suddenly overshadowed by a portentous international development the unpopularity of which was soon obvious to Ministers who had singularly misread the public temper when planning their course. On December 8th simultaneous British and German ultimatums had been handed to a Venezuelan joint Anglo-German naval action had begun with a seizure of Government, guilty of gross financial defaults, and on December 9th Venezuelan warships and the institution of a blockade. By December 16th, however, it was plain that the nation as a whole thoroughly disliked the idea of co-operation with Germany, and more especially when such co-operation threatened the good understanding with the United States, which it had taken more than a century to reach. The dislike which Germany had earned by decades of mingled envy and mockery of Britain will, perhaps, be best understood by quoting the following concise summary of the popular attitude towards the Venezuelan news:¹

Public opinion in Great Britain, though recognising the justice of our claims against Venezuela, was unanimous in condemning the Government for acting in alliance with Germany. Possibly no alliance was ever more unpopular in this country.

During a Recess lasting from December 18th to February 17th Government's unfortunate Venezuelan adventure was liquidated, thanks to some friendly assistance from the United States. Chamberlain's South African journey, indeed, had taken precedence of Venezuelan news long before the blockade was brought to a close on February 13th, and doubtless Government gained something therefrom to set over against its Venezuelan errors. Certainly, the results of Chamberlain's visit could be made to read impressively—Natal's agreement to abandon a claim of two millions on the Imperial Exchequer, the inauguration of the new Government of the Transvaal at Pretoria, and the decision announced at Johannesburg that the Transvaal would be expected to contribute £30,000,000, in three annual instalments, to the cost of the war, though recovery there and in the Orange River Colony would be facilitated by assistance in floating a Development Loan for £35,000,000.² Before Parliament met, there was more apparently

¹ *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1904, p. 386, under December 16, 1902.

² Cf. S. H. Jeyes, *Mr. Chamberlain*, p. 665. The £30,000,000 war-contribution was, of course, to be raised by loan, and Chamberlain made preliminary arrangements to have the first annual instalment of £10,000,000 taken up as loan by the Rand mine-owners.

Rise of the Fiscal Controversy 1903

impressive news of Chamberlain's activities in the Orange River Colony, and the first stages of the Session were conducted to the accompaniment of reports of his adjurations to the Cape Dutch to help, and not to hinder, the work of reconciliation and unification in South Africa. In normal times such things might have been very profitable politically, and by-election results might have reflected the short-sighted optimism into which the British "public" always tends to plunge in regard to distant and ill-understood issues.

But that the times were very abnormal politically was proved by two extraordinary election results recorded the one just before the Colonial Secretary's return and the other just after. On February 18th Lord Charles Beresford, appointed to the command of the Channel Fleet, resigned his Woolwich seat, regarded as so safely Conservative that Opposition had not contested it either at his election or at the last election of his predecessor. Yet on March 11th the "Labour" candidate, Will Crooks, succeeded, with Liberal help and despite his pro-Boer past, in carrying this armaments constituency against a strong Conservative candidate, by the really astonishing figure of 8,487 against 5,458.¹ Scarcely less astonishing was the result of the by-election held on March 17th in the Rye Division of Sussex. There Oppositon's candidate, who had been defeated by 5,376 votes against 2,887 in 1900, now won the seat by 4,910 votes against 4,376.² There was already expressed in these results the possibility, and even the probability, of an electoral "landslide" unless Ministers exercised great care and self-restraint. Their war-management had been notoriously bad; their war-taxation was bitterly attacked as unwise and unjust; unemployment was growing in the midst of a hard winter; and they were being fought by Nonconformists on the "Education Question" with some of the fanaticism of a Crusade. Though, indeed, "Labour" agitation against the Taff Vale Judgement, "Free Trade" criticism of Government's imposts on corn, sugar and tea, pro-Boer warnings of more trickery to be expected from the "Rand millionaires", and the increasing problem of the "Unemployed" all played important parts in darkening Ministers' prospects, nothing seemed more potentially dangerous than the extremes to which the Nonconformists were threatening to carry their resistance to the Education Act. Individual refusal to pay that portion of the Education Rate,

¹ G. Haw, *Will Crooks*, pp. 186-94. ² Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1904, p. 143.

necessitated by the maintenance of the "Voluntary Schools", was being organised on a wide scale even before the new system began to operate,¹ and in Wales the situation was further complicated by the refusal of most County and County Borough Councils to carry out the Education Act's specific directions.² Nor did it help Ministers with Nonconformists that the great London School Board, too, was sentenced to death under the Government's legislative programme for 1903. The Government would have been well advised to overlook the question of educational uniformity, and certainly, a reprieve for the Great London School Board would not only have given Ministers an easier Session but might have reduced the extent and intensity of the Dissenting attack upon them. As it was, the end of 1903 found a Government, divided and distracted by the "Tariff Reform Question", driven farther towards ruin by the necessity of prosecuting thousands of combatant Dissenters who declined to pay that portion of their rates intended for the support of the "Voluntary Schools". Much stronger Governments than Mr. Balfour's might have found reason to fear the outcome of a situation thus summed up in a popular annual, sympathetic to Ministers:³

So widespread is the dissatisfaction with regard to the Education Act that some alteration is almost certain at an early date. Active hostility to the Act has been shown by the Passive Resistance movement. Dr. Robertson Nicoll, in the *British Weekly*, started an agitation in favour of the non-payment of the Education rate. This was taken up in all parts of the country, and many Free Church Councils enrolled the names of conscientious objectors. Many Nonconformists refused to pay the Education rate, and distraints have been numerous. Up to November 10, 1903, there had been 6,525 summonses issued for non-payment and 244 compulsory sales had resulted. Several persons had also been imprisoned. The passive resisters included men and women in all ranks.

Before passing on to deal with the "Tariff Reform Question" that made so sensational a first appearance in 1903, it is necessary to say something of the Irish Land Bill, the "great" Ministerial measure that bulked even more largely in the Sessional proceedings

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1904, p. 387, for the Leeds mass meeting of February 2, 1903.

² Cf. *Daily Mail Year Book*, 1904, p. 314: "In Wales the county and county borough councils refuse in most cases to levy rates for the aid of non-provided schools. Attempts at a concordat . . . have been made in Wales, but up to October last had failed."

³ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

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of 1903 than Government's London Education Bill for abolishing the London School Board. For some time before 1903, a number of Irish landowners had favoured coming to terms with the Irish Nationalist party for the purpose of combining forces in an effort to get a much greater and more continuous flow of Exchequer credits to finance Tenant Land-Purchase than had ever been envisaged before. If there was a quite specious case to urge for a new Irish Land Bill planned on the largest and most generous financial lines,¹ it is none the less true that both landlords and tenants meant to do very well for themselves on the flow of at least 100 millions from the Exchequer, at the rate of five millions a year, authorised by the Irish Land Act of 1903. The landlords, for example, were to be tempted to sell by the attractive bonuses obtainable, even by mere life-owners, from the Land Purchase Aid Fund of twelve millions. The tenants were to be tempted to buy by a reduction in the percentage rate the Exchequer expected to get back every year from a purchasing tenant, receiving an advance. As was inevitable the reduction in the annual payment expected from purchasing tenants to $3\frac{1}{4}$ per cent of the Exchequer advance meant, when allowance was made for interest on the advance at $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent per annum, a period of sixty-eight years was necessary for the purchasing tenants to become full owners.² This was, of course, too long from any prudent Exchequer view and, in the event, the second generation of purchasing tenants, forgetful of the eager promises of the first, found every reason for sympathising with the violent politics that promised them a short cut to full ownership in "a free Ireland".

At the back of the mind of selling landlords and purchasing tenants, there was, doubtless, a full understanding of such a possibility, and of the prospect that the British taxpayer might finally be called upon to bear the larger part of the cost of "evacuating the British garrison". But, meanwhile, despite some inevitable squabbling between Conservatives and Nationalists on such things as the future of mineral and sporting rights, proceedings on the Irish Land Bill often reached almost the level of non-contentious legislation. Ministers had certainly made the Nationalists a great concession and partially eaten their own words when they allowed the "evicted tenants" of the "Land Campaign"—in Nationalist

¹ Cf. *Daily Mail Year Book*, 1904, pp. 98-101.

² Under the Ashbourne Act of 1885 the annual payment expected from the tenant had been 4 per cent of the advance, and the tenant became owner in forty-nine years.

parlance "the wounded soldiers of the war"—to be included in the Bill as eligible for Land Purchase advances despite their rent-resisting record. Another great concession made by Ministers in the hope of "killing Home Rule by kindness" was the opening of the scheme to tenants in arrears with their rent. Indeed the accommodating Exchequer not only undertook to advance up to £7,000 to any single tenant who might require it for purchasing his holding but agreed to the cancellation of arrears, up to a total of one year's rent, from the purchase money advanced.¹ And Radical Oppositionists, who would normally have had the most stinging criticism to offer of this type of "unsound finance", were largely silent since "justice to Ireland" demanded it. Indeed, plenty of examples might be found of Opposition's laying claim, in virtue of Gladstone's Irish Land Acts of 1870 and 1881, to the paternity of all that was good in the Act of 1903.

It is certainly time to turn to those critical fiscal issues of 1903 which so dangerously split the Government and finished the wrecking of its last electoral chances. It may be safely assumed that Ritchie, Chancellor of the Exchequer, had drafted preliminary Budget plans before Chamberlain's return from South Africa on March 14th. It seems possible, judging from later events, that Ritchie had determined to use the tax-reduction chance, brought by the conclusion of hostilities, to end the more adventurous plans for an Imperial Zollverein entertained so long and so warmly in the Chamberlain circle. At any rate when, on April 23rd, Ritchie announced that Income Tax would be reduced from 1s. 3d. to 11d. in the pound and the Corn Duties totally repealed, he had produced a Budget, at once pleasing to the City and reassuring to the party men who dreaded the effects of Opposition's ceaseless clamour against the "bread tax". "Bread tax" figured at the head of a list of dangerous Opposition cries against Ministers that included even the most strenuous objections to their adherence to the International Sugar Convention of 1902 which, according to Opposition, would raise the price of sugar sharply a second time and destroy large confectionery, jam and fruit-preserving industries.² Sugar had been admittedly "over-produced" of late years and the British

¹ *Daily Mail Year Book*, 1904, p. 100.

² Cf. *Hansard*, November 24, 1902, for Harcourt's opposition to Government's resolve to legislate in accordance with the principles of the Sugar Convention. He was beaten by 213 votes against 126 and the legislation made part of Ministers' programme for 1903.

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West Indies ruined. But, according to Opposition, it would have paid England to give the West Indies, as an annual gift, whatever benefit they were likely to derive from the Convention rather than have the immense flow to Britain of under-cost sugar stopped as the effect of international agreement to end the lavish export-subsidies by which continental beet-sugar production had been so excessively stimulated. That Opposition, despite the logical inconsistency of opposing a Convention framed on the best Adam Smith principles, was producing an effect both with a "Dear Sugar" outcry and an outcry against the Coal Export Duties, explains why Ritchie had the party support that enabled him to cross Chamberlain on the even more vital "bread-tax" issue.

It was, of course, on the retention of Corn Duties—once the ice had been broken by their imposition as war-taxation—that Chamberlain had been relying to ease his next step towards a system of Imperial Preference. This step might even have been announced as a "Free Trade" measure since it was intended to declare Ministers' wish to remit Corn Duties in cases like that of Canada which had given Customs concessions to British imports for years and might be ready for negotiations to go farther.¹ But Ritchie's Budget ended the most immediate hopes of getting a British-Canadian agreement which would serve as a model for Imperial Preference arrangements all round, and Chamberlain was driven to undertaking much directer Protectionist advocacy than was politically wise. From the fact that indignation with Mr. Chamberlain was before long to pervade surprisingly large sections of the Conservative party, it must be assumed that his speech at Birmingham on May 15th went farther than his colleagues or, perhaps, even the Prime Minister, had been led to understand. Here are two passages from the oration which illustrate the strength of Chamberlain's pressure for drastic action, that was not to be delayed too long:²

We should insist that we will not be bound by any technical definition of Free Trade; that while we seek as one chief object free interchange of trade and commerce between ourselves and all the nations of the

¹ Cf. *Daily Mail Year Book*, 1904, p. 156, for its summary of Chamberlain's Tynemouth speech of October 21, 1903: "Canada asked for a drawback of the shilling duty on corn. Mr. Ritchie refused to do that, though he was willing to retain the duty all round. He threatened resignation unless he was allowed to abolish the corn duty altogether. Then Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain resolved to place the whole question before the country." Each of the preceding sentences must refer to separate stages of the Ritchie-Chamberlain dispute.

² *Ibid.*, p. 156.

world we will, nevertheless, recover our freedom, resume the power of negotiation, and, if necessary, retaliation whenever our own interests or our relations with our Colonies are threatened by other people. . . .

Unless the question of trade and commerce is satisfactorily settled, I, for one, do not believe in a continued union of the Empire. . . . There is still time to consolidate the Empire. It depends on what we do now whether this great idea is to find fruition, or whether we will for ever and ever dismiss it from our consideration and accept our fate as one of the dying empires of the world.

Opposition, of course, seized upon the speech with zest and affirmed that the Colonies might be interested in Preferences on foodstuffs and raw materials imported into Britain but were quite unable, and would have been unwilling even if they had been able, to make Britain an adequate return for so great a sacrifice as the surrender of Free Trade. In order to obtain some relaxation of the extreme Protectionism of Australia's four and a half millions and Canada's five and a quarter millions, it certainly was not worth the British working-man's while, it was urged, to give up the tremendous advantages he had enjoyed from the completely free entry offered in Britain to the vast majority of the world's foods and the entire range of the world's raw materials. The industrialist, too, was forcibly reminded of the benefits he derived from the low food-costs of his employees, the very low price of his raw materials, and the "most-favoured nation" treatment everywhere accorded, without question, to the products of Free Trade Britain. But more harmful to Mr. Chamberlain's thesis than all the arguments of Opposition was the fact that some of his own colleagues shared Opposition's views and did not hesitate to say so rather than have their imperious Liberal-Unionist associate plunge the party and the country into what they regarded as a most perilous experiment. As Chancellor of the Exchequer Ritchie had apparently already had brushes with Chamberlain even before his speech of May 15th. Afterwards, supported as he was by two highly respected ex-Chancellors of the Exchequer in Sir Michael Hicks-Beach and Lord Goschen, he flatly refused to make Chamberlain any real concession and, in the end, despite the painstaking efforts at conciliation attempted by the Premier, an astonished country saw an almost unprecedented series of resignations undertaken in mid-Recess. But the story is worth telling in the contemporary phrasing of the *Daily Mail Year Book's* summary.¹

¹ *Daily Mail Year Book*, 1904, p. 155.

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On the morning of May 16th, 1903 [it recounts], when men opened their newspapers, they found a genuine sensation in the political world. On the previous evening, Mr. Chamberlain, a member of the Cabinet, without warning, propounded a scheme which, in brief, spelt Protection, taxation of food and Preference to the Colonies—avowedly for the object of Imperial Federation.

Such a scheme meant the reversal of the accepted fiscal policy of the country—the policy of Free Trade—and accordingly the discussion of the question became most acute. On May 28th Mr. Chamberlain returned to the subject in the House of Commons, and a little later, on June 9th–10th, there was a debate apropos of the repeal of the Corn Duty, though the Speaker forbade any direct discussion of Mr. Chamberlain's proposals. In the debate, Mr. Chamberlain's policy was warmly condemned by many members of his own party, including Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, Mr. Arthur Elliot, Mr. Ritchie and Sir John Gorst. On other occasions they were condemned by the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Goschen and Lord George Hamilton.

The Government were constantly heckled in the House of Commons as to their attitude to Mr. Chamberlain's policy, and it was given out that the Cabinet were inquiring into the condition of British Trade; the visible sign of the inquiry was the publication of a Blue Book of facts concerning British Trade. . . .

The matter was keenly debated throughout the country, and several leagues in defence of free food, or Free Trade, were formed. . . .

On August 14th a Cabinet Council was held, at which two memoranda by Mr. Balfour were considered—one advocating freedom to negotiate, and the other in favour of preferential tariffs and taxation of food. The first was approved and the second was not. On September 9th, Mr. Chamberlain tendered his resignation so that he might be at liberty to expound his scheme. This resignation was not gazetted till September 17th. In the meantime two other Councils were held on September 14th and 15th, and after the second Council the Duke of Devonshire, Mr. Ritchie, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, and Lord G. Hamilton sent in their resignations—in ignorance that Mr. Chamberlain had resigned. On the 16th, Mr. Balfour had informed the Duke of that fact, and so the Duke's resignation was withheld, and was not announced till October 6th. This led to the publication of an angry letter from Mr. Balfour to the Duke.

The resignations of Mr. Ritchie and Lord George Hamilton were gazetted on September 17th, and on the 21st those of Lord Balfour of Burleigh and Mr. Arthur Elliot were announced. On September 16th, Mr. Balfour's pamphlet entitled "Insular Free Trade" was published, and at Sheffield, on October 1st, he advocated a policy of retaliation, though he confessed that "a tax on food is not, with public opinion in the state it is, within the limits of practical politics". Mr. Chamberlain opened his campaign as a fiscal missionary at Glasgow on October 6th, and since then has addressed many large gatherings in support of his policy. Counter demonstrations of Free Traders have also been held,

and Mr. Chamberlain's contentions with regard to the condition of British Trade have been controverted and his proposed remedies severely condemned. . . .

It should never be forgotten that behind this bald account of Cabinet crises there is a story of British industry in deep depression for several successive years.¹ Mr. Chamberlain himself was largely the spokesman of British industrialist groups, suffering from long-continued "bad trade" and accounting themselves impossibly handicapped against German and United States competition both by the Free Trade system and by the exceptional restrictions upon industrial organisation and machinery imposed by the British Trade Unions.² On the Trade Union side, these industrialist groups had obtained from the law the important "relief" of the Taff Vale Judgement and now, in 1903, their rally to the Imperial Tariff Committee and the Tariff Reform Union showed their hopes of benefits from Mr. Chamberlain's agitation. When the Trade Unions, already moved by the Taff Vale Judgement to undertake large-scale political activities through the Labour Representation Committee, professed to see in "Food-Tax" proposals what would take "Labour" to power after a short interval of Liberal rule, the anger of their industrial opponents overflowed. In one remarkable book, entitled *The Coming Reaction* which issued from Tariff Reform circles, there was a frank avowal of what would later have been called Fascist views. A quotation from the anonymous "Legislator's" introduction is worth giving.

"The nineteenth century," wrote this unnamed author, "has been consecrated to the religion of democracy. Loud and swelling have been the platitudes which have trumpeted forth the advent of a new era, the coming millennium, the glorious time in which all men shall be equal, free and happy, when wars and industrial competition and individual ambitions shall cease. And endless have been the formulas, theories, and quack nostrums, which have been put forward in the cause of the great movement of democratic advance.

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1905, p. 664: "In 1903 it was pointed out that history was merely repeating itself when trade showed a retrograde movement for 1901 and 1902, and it should not be at all surprising if the next few years were somewhat lean after the long period of prosperity from 1895 to 1900. At least the years 1903 and 1904 have borne out the course which it was then anticipated trade would be likely to take. . . ."

² Cf. *The Times* for a series of articles on "The Crisis in British Industry" begun on November 18, 1901. The series was most anti-"Labour" in tone and concluded on January 16, 1902, with a demand that the whole character of the "Labour Department" of the Board of Trade should be altered and even its name changed to the "Industrial Intelligence Department".

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"There are not wanting signs that this movement has spent its force and that the reaction is at hand. The twentieth century is already setting its face towards a return upon the experience of the nineteenth. . . . On every hand the cry is for efficiency in all departments of public life—political and economic—and by the side of this cry the old shibboleths of the nineteenth century, democracy and socialism, are falling into contempt.

"On the Continent constitutional government is an admitted failure, and the tendency is to kick out paper constitutions and to revert to strong rule. In the great self-governing colonies and in the American Commonwealth not less than in England itself, thinking men are shocked by the political corruption or the hopeless administrative inefficiency which characterises democratic rule.

"Equally so in the economic domain. The paralysing influences of the labour movement and the blind futility of the socialist movement are matters of everyday observation. Not merely is public opinion ripening to throw off the incubus of the everlasting labour movement, but also the actual trend of events in the domain of international commerce is bringing us to the threshold of strife."

By the end of 1903, indeed, those who like "Legislator" hoped that Government had passed through the worst and that a "reaction" might be expected, could point to some justification. In August very grave moments had begun when a blistering Royal Commission Report had been issued on the utter lack of preparedness, in 1899, at the War Office,¹ and when an Argyllshire by-election had yielded Opposition a sensational victory.² September with its four Cabinet resignations had been an even more trying month for Government, while the Duke of Devonshire's definite departure from the Cabinet early in October had been regarded by pessimists, mindful of his prestige as the "Liberal leader" of 1875-80 and the man who had declined three chances of the Premiership, as the worst blow of all.³ But when Mr. Balfour

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1904, under August 25, 1903: "Publication of the report of the Royal Commission on the South African War, revealing a dreadful complication of mismanagement, muddle and incompetence." Though the War Secretary of 1899, Lord Lansdowne, had been moved to another department as early as 1900, Mr. Balfour thought fit to meet public criticism by transferring his successor of 1900-3, Mr. Brodrick, to the India Office in order to permit a "new broom", Mr. Arnold-Forster, to undertake further reorganisation.

² The poll of 1900, 3,834 for Government against 3,234 for Opposition, was converted on August 27th into a poll of 4,326 for Opposition against 2,740 for Government.

³ Cf. Bernard Holland, *Life of the Duke of Devonshire, 1833-1908* ii, 298-401, for pulling, from different directions, for Devonshire's support. The young and adventurous politician, Winston Churchill, for example, may be found, in September, writing on the fiscal quarrel thus: "On my last visit to Oldham two working men at different clubs informed me that they would wait to see what you

succeeded in reconstructing his Government without by-election losses, the worst might be deemed to be over, and hopeful Conservatives could further argue that Mr. Chamberlain's speech-making round through Glasgow on October 6th, Greenock on October 7th, Newcastle on October 20th, Tynemouth on October 21st, Liverpool on October 27th, Birmingham on November 4th, Cardiff on November 20th and Newport, Monmouthshire, on November 21st, should at least have convinced the country that Mr. Balfour had been justified in accepting part of his case despite "Free Trade" threats and resignations. At any rate in spite of the ominously good figures Opposition succeeded in raising at by-elections in constituencies left to Government uncontested in 1900, Ministerial supporters could point, at the end of 1903, to the successful holding of Government seats at the last nine by-elections of the year. Rochester, it could be claimed, had been well held in September, in October Opposition had not ventured to contest the return of two newly appointed Ministers for the Westhoughton Division of Lancashire and the Fareham Division of Hampshire, and in November the attempt to prevent the return of another of the new Ministers for the Chorley Division of Lancashire was heavily repulsed. Finally, in December, Opposition's challenge at the Lewisham and Ludlow by-elections had yielded Government quite satisfactory majorities.

Of course, some of the reassurance Government partisans professed to derive from the electoral figures was more specious than real. Chamberlain had privately held for some time that the results of the Education Act and the War Office Inquiry would prove fatal to the Government at the next General Election though he had originally hoped, with the aid of Fiscal Reform, to prevent the inevitable Liberal Ministry, that succeeded, from being either strong or long-lived.¹ Skilled observers, moreover, knew for a

decided, and I believe your influence is much greater than perhaps you think. We are on the eve of a gigantic political landslide. I don't think Balfour and those about him realise. . . ." Churchill made it plain that he had already begun considering "crossing the floor" and in October he even ventured to offer Devonshire his aid in securing "the reconstitution of the Liberal party in its old power and integrity".

¹ Cf. B. Holland, *Life of Devonshire*, ii, 355-6, for Chamberlain writing reproachfully to Devonshire on September 21st: "If the Cabinet and the Party had been united we might have faced the General Election with confidence that even if we were defeated—as I believe we should have been on Education and War Office Reforms—we should have had a policy for the future which time and discussion would have made victorious."

"Education and our War Office policy—on both of which I warned the

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certainly that Balfour's reconstruction of the Government, after the resignations of September and October, had been influenced above all by the need of offering Opposition no reasonable chance of by-election success. Finally, as by-election results were once more to start proving in 1904, the really significant thing about the electoral figures of the last four months of 1903 was not the Conservative retention of the seats but the high Opposition figures polled at Rochester, Chorley, Dulwich, Lewisham and Ludlow, places regarded by Opposition in 1900 as so electorally hopeless that they had been left to Government uncontested.¹

This is not the place to discuss in what measure Government's apparently better by-election results may have heartened Ministers to decline a timid non-contentious Sessional programme for 1904. The end of this chapter must be devoted, in preference, to showing in a brief series of speech-extracts, how a typical Radical member for a typical Radical constituency criticised Ministers from the closing stages of the Boer War to the end of 1903.

In Francis Channing, M.P. since 1885 for the chapels of East Northants, the (ex-) School Boards, the "progressive" or discontented farmers and farm labourers and apparently, the bulk of the railway and boot and shoe operatives too, there is a better example of the typical Radical legislator than most that could be found. Here is Channing in his constituency on July 29, 1902, reporting Opposition activities during the Session:²

They had a tough battle for the vitality and efficiency of the House, a tougher battle against unjust taxation, which was steadily transferring burdens from the rich to the poor, and now in the corn tax, small though it was, raised a mighty question which should stir the blood of every man who cherished freedom. They were told the Income Tax should first come off. If the people did not speak out, it meant lightening Income Tax by taxes on food. It was the most tremendous session known in his time. They were fighting night by night the iniquitous Education Bill. The Bill violated the principles of Local Government

Cabinet and yourself especially that you were destroying your party—gave us Greenwich and Rye and Kent—all before the fiscal question was mentioned. Where have you had such a turnover of votes since?"

¹ *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1905, gives the polling-figures thus: Rochester, Government votes 2,504 against Opposition's 1,983; Chorley, Government votes 6,226 against Opposition's 4,798; Dulwich, Government votes 5,819 against Opposition's 4,382; Lewisham, Government votes 7,709 against Opposition's 5,697; and Ludlow, Government votes 4,393 against Opposition's 3,423.

² Cf. F. A. Channing, *Memories of Midland Politics, 1885-1910*, pp. 276-7.

and religious liberty. The Bill annihilated School Boards because they had done their work, had educated the people nobly. Why not rather build upon that corner-stone? They were depriving the electors of their right to select men or women to deal with the education of their children. They were forcing on the rates schools where they could teach their own dogmas at the public expense—a flagrant injustice against which the people ought to rise. Women and working men would be excluded in practice from the new committees, except where a town like Kettering had its own Education Committee. They had tried to save the freedom of Wellingborough, too, but in vain. The only success they could get was to kill that Bill. He would use every means in his power. It was not a battle of the sects. The issue was—Fair play to the child.

If that represents Channing in the middle of the Education struggle, here he is, in May 1903, joyfully encouraging the Trades Council of Kettering, the biggest place in his constituency, on its first steps against Tariff Reform.¹

“This,” he wrote, “like all Protectionist schemes, is an ingenious plan to make the rich richer at the expense of the poor. The poor are to be tempted into the trap by the promise of old-age pensions, to be paid out of their own earnings and the restriction of their children’s food. The whole business is theatrical clap-trap to puzzle the unwary, and make them forget Education Bills and other wrongs. Preferential Tariffs will do good to nobody, without doing bigger mischiefs to everybody else. To raise the price of food is a dastardly crime against a rapidly increasing population, and the heaviest of handicaps on British industries. This humbug deserves crushing defeat from a thoughtful democracy, determined to be free.”

As the Tariff Reform debate grew hotter through the summer and autumn, Channing’s constituency letters and speeches centred on it more and more. Here is Channing’s own summary of his message to his constituency Summer Meeting, a message very characteristic of the line Opposition was taking all over the country.²

I had hoped for this public opportunity to denounce the wicked policy Mr. Chamberlain is trying to force on his party and the country. His excuse is talk of (dumping foreign) “Trusts”—He is not defeating Trusts abroad, but inaugurating absolute despotism of Trusts at home, based on a lowered standard of life. It is the greatest insanity in English political history. . . . Thousands of Unionists throughout the country will join us in defending the well-being of the English people.

¹ F. A. Channing, *Memories of Midland Politics, 1885-1910*, p. 285.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 285-6.

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Mr. Chamberlain states that employment at fair wages will be better for "the twelve millions on the verge of starvation", even if they pay more for food.

He thus admits his proposals involve taxing food, and increased cost of living.

His own letters to the *Economist* of 1885 answer his present argument. Those letters demonstrated that *in taxes of all kinds* the rich in 1885 were paying about 6 per cent on their incomes, while the working classes were paying 13½ per cent on theirs. A similar calculation applied to the taxes of 1902-3 shows about 9 per cent payment by the rich and 17½ per cent by the workers. This, of course, includes the new Death Duties in the contribution of the rich, and the three "war duties" on sugar, corn and addition to tea duty. These figures should stagger advocates of increasing indirect taxation.

Applying Mr. Chamberlain's method (of 1885) to seventy working-class family budgets supplied to me by leading co-operators, I find these extra war-duties—apart from indirect taxes payable before the war—meant an income tax of 7*d.*, and the total indirect taxation payable last year by such families runs to about 2*s.* 6*d.* in the pound.

On Mr. Chamberlain's plan, what would they pay three years hence? Supposing the Corn Duty reappears at 5*s.*, meat is taxed at 4*s.*, and the Sugar Convention doubles the sugar duty, as the experts state, taking my seventy budgets, and family budgets from Mr. Rowntree's *Poverty in York*, I find that Mr. Chamberlain's scheme and the Sugar Convention would probably raise the income tax on the workers to about 3*s.* 9*d.* or 4*s.* in the pound—a total taxation exactly double what Mr. Chamberlain in 1885 pronounced intolerably unjust. He now promises a new balance-sheet, with higher wages to balance increased food prices.

What chance is there of wages rising enough to even keep the workers on their present level, when Mr. Rowntree says half the workers have too little for bare physical efficiency? Even if raw materials are not taxed, the food taxes will increase the cost of production. Where are the employers who could raise wages enough to put back into the workers' pockets all these new food duties, with a substantial bonus in addition?

It will be noticed that if suppressions and exaggerations occurred in Mr. Chamberlain's Tariff Reform advocacy, they were not absent from the arguments of his opponents. For example, it was hardly fair to give the very questionable figure of 2*s.* 6*d.* in the pound as the measure, in 1902-3, of the indirect taxation paid by working-class incomes and yet make no allusion to the fact that working men's voluntary purchases of drink and tobacco accounted for a large part even of Mr. Channing's swollen estimate. Again it seems doubtful if Mr. Channing could really have believed in the

possibility, for instance, of a 5s. per qr. corn duty when the Tariff Reformers were merely trying to prepare the public for a 2s. duty from which Empire corn was to be free and maize of all origins excluded, because of its importance for farmers' cattle-feed. Mr. Channing's estimate of the results of the Sugar Convention, useful though it might be in forcing the fancy-picture of the "indirect taxation" threatening the working classes to "about 3s. 9d. or 4s. in the pound", also proved an exaggerated one.¹ And it can hardly be claimed that the Radical member for East Northants took a very far-sighted view of the position of the country's basic heavy industries, absent of course, from his own constituency, when of some of his activities the autumn of 1903 he could cheerfully write the following:

Mr. Chamberlain having said at Glasgow "that it is all over with the British iron trade because ten million tons of American steel may be 'dumped' in England below cost price", I replied, in the press, that such a vast accession of cheap raw material would be an enormous stimulus to just the British industries most threatened with competition—shipbuilding, the most important of all, engineering, heavy and fine machinery for textiles, the whole range of tools and cutlery. It would strengthen our power to beat competitors, and expand both export and home trade. American shipbuilding, iron and steel manufactures, have been held back for a generation by American protective duties. Why should we weaken our position by repeating here that economic unwisdom? Why take the mischief and lose the profits of American folly? (And) at Irthlingborough (I declared on November 27th):

Chamberlain said agriculture was doomed without his tax but Balfour showed that even the tiny shilling duty put on, and now taken off, had meant a loss to the farmers of half a million over feeding stuffs! "Every trade was perishing" (according to Chamberlain). Northamptonshire was scarcely a county to find Rip Van Winkles. But if there was one, and he came back after his long sleep, he would find dozens

¹ Cf. the very "Free Trade" *Financial Reform Almanack*, 1906, p. 235, for some incidental admissions: "As our readers know, Continental countries had been in the habit for very many years of supplying sugar in this country at a price far cheaper than the prices charged in their own countries, the different States granting bounties to enable them to do so. In response to the agitation got up by the sugar refiners and the West India planters (here is only impatience with British interests that had suffered for decades), the Government entered into a convention to prohibit the importation of any sugar coming from bounty-giving countries. The consequence was that while the price of sugar increased here it was lowered on the Continent and thousands of workers in confectionery, etc., in this country were thrown idle. But it is said, 'Sugar is now cheaper than it has been for years'. In the first place this is not so, secondly, the sugar crop throughout the world has been greater. . . . The sugar now sold at 2d. to 2½d. a lb. would have been 1d. a lb. but for the convention and the duty (½d.) imposed by the present Government."

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of new factories, street after street of new houses, everywhere. Chamberlain started from 1872 his "golden age". The average wealth then was £230 for every man, woman and child. Now it was £350. Again, were exports "perishing"? Ten months gave nine millions increase over the same months of last year. . . . Mr. C. was the worst commercial traveller in the world, shouting through his megaphone that no one would take British goods unless bullied or bribed! Instead of Protection, they wanted nationalisation of railways, encouragement to invention, a knock-out blow to paralysing drink.

But large though all this Tariff Reform debating loomed in politics towards the end of 1903, it was not the whole story. Opposition abandoned not a single one of its older charges against Ministers even when defending "Free Trade" from their "machinations" most loudly and conjuring up new storms against their alleged preparations to "endow the publican" at home while providing the guilty war-mongering millionaires of South Africa with "slave labour from China" for their mines.¹ In East Northants, again, Channing, who liked to think of himself as one of Opposition's best links with "Labour", gave a considerable place, in his accounts of the 1903 Session, not only to such further questions as Opposition's quarrels with Ministers on the details of Army Reform and the Irish Land Bill but "to my help to Keir Hardie on the Unemployed, and to Shackleton over the first Trades Disputes Bill and to pressing the Government as to (automatic railway) 'couplings', 'more sub-inspectors' and more effective working of the Railway Hours Act". But it was a Liberal Peer, brought into the constituency by Channing, who delivered the most telling summary it heard of Opposition's complete case against Ministers by the end of 1903. And with this summary the chapter must end.²

"If he were asked," declared Lord Coleridge, "how it was they had a Conservative Government, his answer was that the Conservatives did what they promised. They had 'looked after their friends'. The English and Scotch landlords and been relieved of half their rates; £160,000 a year, then £727,000 had gone to the Irish landlords, and by the Irish Land Act twelve millions of our money had gone to Irish

¹ Cf. F. A. Channing, *Memories of Midland Politics, 1885-1910*, p. 288, for a first mention of "Chinese slavery" in South Africa by Channing at a meeting in his constituency on December 10th. He denounced it as "this scheme for a slave empire".

² *Ibid.*, pp. 289-90. Coleridge had been the Gladstonian member for the Attercliffe Division of Sheffield (1885-94) before his father's death had transferred him to the Lords.

landlords again. That was a pretty good start. The parsons got relief on their tithes, Church schools got vast sums, and, finally, by the Education Act, were quartered entirely on the rates. Now the brewers got their turn. Licences were made freeholds, with compensation if taken away."

(Turning to the vast expenditure, the mismanaged war, and the suppressed reports of the Inquiries, Lord Coleridge continued) "Where was the dream now? Nothing remained except the debt they had to pay—except the memory of the gallant lives lost—the hostility of opponents who would never be content till they gave their colony self-government, and made them loyal, because free.

"This Government were fettering everything. Many powerful Governments had done things in the day of their strength, and these things had been undone. . . . Education might go as Church Rates had gone.

"Chamberlain was throwing the hounds off the scent to save his Party. The Empire was perishing, and he alone could save it. It was odd all these terrible things had come about since he and his friends came into power. Why should they trust him? Had he inflexible principles? They had changed more often than the moon. Was he a man of foresight? (Cry of 'Yes' and loud laughter.) Well, he was once a Republican, now a Monarchist; once a Home Ruler, now a Unionist; once a Radical, now a Tory; Free Trader once, now Protectionist. And the worst was, he was always cocksure he was right!

"Stiff in opinion, always in the wrong:
Was everything by turn and nothing long.'

"He (Lord Coleridge) went on to argue the commonplaces of Free Trade. They had (under Tariff Reform) to pay more for everything, somebody would receive more for everything. The favoured few would be the agricultural landlords and selected groups of manufacturers. It would mean bringing Tammany Hall to England—the corruption of their political life. Their business men should not fence themselves in with man-traps and spring-guns. Let them meet their rivals in the open ('How?'). Educate yourselves. How? Work hard! and drink less! If only a fraction of those 180 millions wasted on drink went to industry, what might not this country do?"

CHAPTER XXI

1904

"I asked the Annual Meeting to speak out against the proposals (in the Licensing Bill) to create, illegally, a new vested interest for the drink monopoly and to deprive the people of their remedy, the power of magistrates. The Farnham case had confirmed their right to enforce schemes of local reduction of public-houses. Where magistrates had taken action, drunkenness had diminished. This attack on the controlling authority is unconstitutional. Compensation, even out of trade profits, means interception of vast revenues which the State itself ought to apply to national objects.

"On the Fiscal question, Balfour's pronouncement on the amendment excluding taxes on food was unintelligible. He surrendered to the 'whole-hoggers' a fraction of the Unionist party. In bye-elections, thousands of Conservatives had voted Liberal. A majority of Unionists distrust and wish to escape from Mr. Chamberlain.

"We Liberals have to save the country—to win a victory as tremendous as the responsibilities to be faced—to cut down extravagance, to adjust taxation of the poor on whom the burdens of the rich have been piled, to provide new revenue for social reforms. Instead of Chinese Ordinances and millionaire oligarchy, we must give South Africa self-government on Australian lines.

"We want a Ministry clear-sighted, united, with a majority like 1880. We shall get it. The people are weary of wrongdoing. Millions of men and women realise the meaning of nine years stolen by false pretences from British progress. We are led with courage and sagacity by Campbell-Bannerman. Unity and good will mark Party action. Labour and Liberalism never have been so closely in touch. Best of all, there is—partly springing from this union of Liberalism and Labour—a riper, wiser temper of constructive reform. The supreme duty will be to make the lives of the people, in town and country, more human, more worthy of the instincts of a free and patriotic nation."

F. A. Channing, M.P., exhorts the East Northants Liberal Association's Annual Meeting, April 13, 1904.

IN January 1904 there occurred four by-elections, and the run of luck, which the Cabinet had enjoyed towards the end of 1903 in just beating off Opposition attacks, held no longer. After polling in the Ashburton Division of Devon had shown an Opposition barrister not merely holding the seat of his widely respected predecessor, the Gladstonian Minister, Seale-Hayne, but greatly improving on his figures,¹ there came the Norwich by-election of January 15th. In view of the exceptionally controversial nature of current politics, the whole country was studying by-elections closely, and at Norwich the result promised peculiar enlightenment. The constituency had returned two Conservatives unopposed in 1900, and now Opposition's vote for the single vacancy was to be divided between a local Liberal solicitor and a rival "Labour" nominee. The Conservative candidate, too, diplomatically held himself uncommitted to anything in "Fiscal Reform" save inquiry into how to stop "dumping" by foreign Trusts at prices below the cost of production. When, despite these exceptional advantages of position, the Conservative candidate polled only 6,756 votes against the 8,576 of the victorious Liberal and the 2,444 of the "Labour" man, the reality of Government's plight became obvious even to some who had professed to see signs of a "reaction" in its favour. There was, of course, more close attention to the by-election due on January 19th at Gateshead where a Durham Miners' candidate, diplomatically adopted by the local Liberal Association in succession to Sir William Allan, not only held a seat, regarded as particularly vulnerable to Protectionist attack, but increased his knightly predecessor's poll from 6,657 to 8,320.² Here, however, the Conservative poll had risen too, and so there was more anxious attention for the result of the Ayr District by-election of January 29th. This election resulted in the second Opposition gain of the month, for a 1900 poll of 3,101 for Government against Opposition's 2,511 was converted into one of 3,211 for Opposition against Government's 3,177. It was no cheerful

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1901 and 1905, for the figures. In 1900 Seale-Hayne's vote had been 4,487 against Government's 3,716 whereas the figures of January 7, 1904 were 5,034 for Opposition, against Government's 3,558.

² Cf. J. Wilson, *History of the Durham Miners' Association*, pp. 326-9, for another Liberal Association, that of South-East Durham, that was anxious for a Durham Miners' candidate. The leaders of the Durham Miners were opposed to "Labour" extremism of the S.D.F. or even the I.L.P. type.

precursor for Government's effort in the Parliamentary Session that was to begin on February 2, 1904.

The 1904 Session is a most difficult one to deal with satisfactorily except at a length that is impossible here. Events of vast importance were taking place in the international sphere—the Russo-Japanese War, for example, begun on February 8th, and the Anglo-French colonial negotiations which produced the famous Agreement of April 8th and before long, the informal alliance, known as the *entente cordiale*. There were other events, too, of secondary magnitude, such as the unending Macedonian troubles, presaging a new shrinkage of the Ottoman Empire in Europe, and the British humanitarian agitation against the King of Belgium's merciless exploitation of the private preserve for which, under "false pretences", he had secured international recognition as the Congo Free State. Yet, at home, the political scene was dominated almost entirely by bitter party recriminations, and the manœuvres of groups on each side were of a character and extent, familiar enough on the Continent, but hardly ever known before in British politics. Of course, much was made by Opposition of the quarrelling factions into which the great majority that had held power since 1895 had become divided—Chamberlainite "Food-Taxers", Balfourian advocates of a *via media*, Conservative Free Fooders of the Hicks-Beach brand, Liberal-Unionist Free Traders of the Devonshire brand and a final school of Conservatives and Unionists, prepared like Winston Churchill and Ivor Guest, to "rat" to Opposition altogether. Yet Opposition was itself deeply riven, and this not merely by the long-familiar independence of Opposition's Front Bench maintained by the Irish Nationalists and imitated by the new and yet scanty "independent" Labour group.¹ Even in the "Liberal" Opposition, taken by itself, the mere question, for instance, of who was to be the next "Liberal" Prime Minister was a matter of unending debate. Rosebery and his "Imperialist" friends of the Liberal League were known to regard Campbell-Bannerman as too old and incompetent for the task, while a "Liberal" Cabinet that should attempt to function without five

¹ Cf. A. W. Humphrey, *A History of Labour Representation*, pp. 134-53. The "independent" Labour group, as opposed to those sitting as Liberal "Labour" men should, at this stage, include, perhaps, only Keir Hardie (Merthyr), D. J. Shackleton (Clitheroe), Will Crooks (Woolwich) and Arthur Henderson (Barnard Castle). But the growth of the group was already foreseen as certain to be large and rapid.

such men as Rosebery, Asquith, Fowler, Haldane and Grey seemed doomed in advance to become the extremist Radical "tabernacle" which Chamberlain was confident of reducing to a helpless laughing-stock in a couple of Sessions.¹

The fear that Chamberlain was right, whatever the Radical gains at the next election, prompted much anxious search for a "Liberal" Premier under whom both Campbell-Bannerman and Rosebery could consent to serve without "loss of face". In some of the numerous "Cabinet lists" circulated, therefore, by political prophets, or those pushing the claims of particular politicians, Earl Spencer figured as Prime Minister.² As Gladstone's Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland between 1868 and 1874, Earl Spencer had been in high office while Rosebery was still a stripling and Campbell-Bannerman still a private member. It was known, moreover, that, after Spencer's subsequent service in the three Gladstonian Cabinets of 1880, 1886 and 1892, he would have been Gladstone's own nominee for the Prime Ministership if Queen Victoria had asked his advice in 1894. But the introduction of Spencer's name into Premiership discussions only made new difficulties for, born in October 1835, he was older even than Campbell-Bannerman and much more out of touch with such "democratic" developments as made Keir Hardie and the growth of the Independent Labour Party very proper subjects of concern to any prospective Liberal Premier. And if Spencer's strong support of "Home Rule" in the Cabinets of 1886 and 1892 was claimed for him with the "democracy" as a merit, that was inevitably to raise a new difficulty alongside such formidable ones already facing Opposition as the Bannerman-Rosebery deadlock and the reported attempts of prominent "Liberal Imperialists" and "Little Englanders" to

¹ Cf. *Nineteenth Century*, July 1904, p. 155: "Rumour . . . has for months past informed the world that Mr. Chamberlain does not look for a Ministerial victory at the next General Election. . . . What Mr. Chamberlain anticipates is a Liberal majority of somewhat uncertain extent. The Opposition is then to come into power, and is to remain in office for a very limited period, not exceeding two years. This is the forecast of one who is both a shrewd judge and a pronounced adversary of the Liberal party."

² *Ibid.*, p. 157: "The Prime Minister referred at least once during last month to the alleged lists—'alternative lists' I think he called them—of the next administration which are popularly supposed to be enshrined in the cabinets of certain prominent members of the Opposition. . . . That there are alternative Governments ready to step into the shoes of Mr. Balfour and his colleagues in the present Ministry is certain. . . ." Cf. *Ibid.*, October 1904, pp. 684-5, for a Spencer list with Spencer as Premier, Dilke as Foreign Secretary and Asquith as Leader of the Commons.

blackball one another from membership of the next Cabinet.¹ Rosebery had tried and was still trying hard to "wipe the Liberal slate clean" of the whole somewhat sorry history of past Liberal commitments to Parnellites and Anti-Parnellites, commitments whose basic conditions, it could be claimed, had been violated time and again by the Irish politicians whenever they could gain temporary advantage by playing with notions of physical violence on the one hand, or treating with Conservatism on the other, for special School and University advantages for the Catholic priesthood. It was, indeed, on the prompt revival of Irish Nationalist "blackmail" and Liberal Home Rule Bills that Chamberlain largely relied for securing the speedy ejection of the Liberal Cabinet whose temporary admission to office he had for some time recognised as inevitable. And a Spencer Cabinet might be held to be as much tarred with the fatal "Home Rule" brush as one under Campbell-Bannerman.

It is, then, against this unusual background of eager speculation and intrigue that the story of the 1904 Session has to be told, a background that is often forgotten because the half-expected fall of the Balfour Government during its course never took place after all.² And, to be fair to the bigger guns of the Front Benches it should be said at once that the slightest acquaintance with the Sessional history of lesser guns like Lloyd George and Winston Churchill, not to mention Keir Hardie and "Independent Labour", would reveal the same eager and restless urge to manœuvre into a favourable position for the inevitable General Election or change of Government. Possibly in the long game of manœuvre and counter-manœuvre, played out "in the country" as well as at Westminster, the Tariff Reformers' lavish use of coloured wall and hoarding

¹ Cf. *Nineteenth Century*, July 1904, pp. 157-8: "But what is to be the special brand of Liberalism that the next Ministry will represent? There are writers in the Press and a few speakers on the platform who insist that it must be openly and strenuously anti-Imperialist in tone. . . . There are others who hold that even the least infusion of the 'little England' spirit into the new Government would . . . probably bring about its destruction well within the brief term of life which Mr. Chamberlain and his friends have assigned to it."

² Cf. *Ibid.*, September 1904, p. 499: "The one event which in January everybody expected to be the distinguishing feature of the Session was the event which did not happen. There was no fatal defeat of the Ministry, and, contrary to universal anticipation, Mr. Balfour emerged from the conflict at Westminster still occupying the office of Prime Minister. . . . It was among the ranks of the Ministerialists, and even among the members of the Cabinet, that the gloomiest forebodings of the fate of the Ministry were heard six months ago."

placards, "illustrating" the unemployed British worker's plight under a régime of unlimited "dumping" and "alien immigration" brought in considerably less support from the "people" than had been expected. This may partly have been because there was a rival exploitation of "unemployment" by "Independent Labour" and partly because Opposition countered the Tariff Reformers with pictures of the contrast between the big Free Trade loaf, the big Free Trade sugar-basin and the big Free Trade teapot and the smaller measure that had already been dealt out by Ministers even before they had been able to carry Tariff Reform.¹ Another successful line of argument adopted by Opposition was to put the blame for the existing trade depression on Ministers' extravagant armaments and wasteful "war-mongering". And, then, apart from shrewd exploitation of the alleged iniquity of the Government policy of "doles" for all manner of landlords, parsons, publicans and brewers, Opposition made much use of "Chinese slavery" and the Cobden Centenary. It was a veritable godsend to Liberal organisers all over the country that Cobden had been born on June 3, 1804, and they even improved on the occasion by arranging that their widespread celebrations should take place not strictly on June 3, 1904, but on June 4th, a Saturday. Here shall be chronicled only one angry Protectionist's comment on what might be called the central Cobdenite celebrations at the Alexandra Hall, London, those graced by the presence of the Leader of Opposition himself. Of these the angry Protectionist wrote:²

Sir Henry's pompous eulogies were supported by a clap-trap speech of Mr. Winston Churchill, who ignored Cobden, except as far as he dwelt upon the importance to Free Trade of his own conversion to Cobdenian orthodoxy, and wound up with a stirring peroration in which he described the Unionists, whom he had just deserted, as "a capitalist party, the mere washpot of plutocracy, the engine of the tariff and the trust, a hard confederation of interest and monopoly banded together to corrupt and plunder the Commonwealth".

It is certainly time to attempt the briefest summary of a handful of the Session's most characteristic happenings. From Parliament's opening on February 2nd until February 19th Opposition made all the trouble it could on the Address, and sometimes the figures on

¹ Based on the writer's own collection of cartoons and posters.

² *Nineteenth Century*, July 1904, p. 164 (Edward Dicey).

its amendments seemed distinctly promising. Thus Morley's amendment, pointing to the anomaly of Cabinet Ministers continuing together despite wide differences of opinion on Food Taxes and Tariff Reform, brought Opposition a vote of 276 against 327. Opposition was, of course, much encouraged by a striking by-election victory on February 12th at St. Albans where a Government candidate had been returned unopposed in 1900 and yet an Opposition member was now elected.¹ There was encouragement also in a second reduction of Government's majority in Parliament to 51 when Herbert Samuel's amendment, reprobating the introduction of Chinese coolie labour into the Transvaal, raised a vote of 230 against 281. Throughout the Session, outside Parliament, perhaps, more than within, Opposition found what was soon extravagantly called the "Chinese slavery" issue an increasing advantage. For one thing it particularly lent itself, as will be seen, to a proletarian and philanthropic mobilisation behind the Opposition, and a first Hyde Park demonstration on March 20th and the Anti-Slavery Society's condemnation on April 18th, were merely earnest of things to come. But more important to Opposition even than this, was the facility with which the "Chinese slavery" issue lent itself to melodramatic recapitulations of the whole alleged history of guilty Government connivance, since 1895, with the often criminal stratagems of greedy South African millionaires, many of them German Jews. The Jameson Raid, in these accounts, was promoted because the Boer Government did not see fit to allow grasping capitalists to cheapen their gold-production costs and increase their already stupendous profits by the full use of their diamond-mine methods of cutting down white labour to a minimum and substituting, wherever possible, hordes of Kaffirs, driven by deliberately imposed taxation to take service in "that foul labour system known as the compound system of Kimberley".²

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1901, p. 141 and 1905, p. 143.

² Quoted from *The Financial Reform Almanack*, 1906, to show what the super-Cobdenites of the Financial Reform Association were capable of when their blood was up. The account continues (p. 13): "Into closed spaces, surrounded by barbed-wire entanglement, they herded the Kaffir labourers during the term of their indenture, providing them with wares and women. When the diamond mine owners of Kimberley became the gold mine owners of the Transvaal, they naturally wished to operate their gold mines upon the same ideal labour system as their diamond mines. But there was an obstacle in the way—that obstacle being the Boer Government. . . . The Boer Government would take no steps to enable the mine owners to cut down Kaffir wages, and reap an increase of profit to the extent of £630,000 per annum. . . . The Jameson Raid was the outcome. . . ."

English Radicalism 1886-1914

The history of South Africa after the Jameson Raid was, in fact, often summarised in this fashion:¹

It was, doubtless, then seen that the assistance of Great Britain must be invoked to get rid of the retrograde Government that stood in the way of the industry obtaining labour at the ideal rate of one shilling a day. So the cosmopolitan financiers then set to work to foment the war agitation against the Boer Government. During the course of that agitation the Boer Government appointed the Industrial Commission to enable the mine-owners to state their requirements. . . . They stated that they wanted labour at one shilling a day, and demanded that the Government should assist by increasing the taxation on the natives, to force them to the mines, or by introducing a system of "forced labour". . . .

. . . the mine-owners were thwarted in their endeavour to get the Kaffirs enslaved, or reduced to a wage of one shilling a day. . . . Undeterred they formulated a new plan . . . and demanded the right to introduce Chinese labour. . . . But again they were met with a refusal, and when they threatened to close down the mines and bankrupt the State, were met with a counter-threat that the Government in such a case would forfeit the mines, and work them for the benefit of the community. . . . More than ever became it necessary, therefore, to get rid of a Government that stood so resolutely in the way of a reduction in working costs by way of serf labour. Great Britain was therefore called upon to fight a "Miners' War", in the interests of "Justice, Freedom, and Civilisation", and to promote bestowal of the franchise. Before the war was over the cosmopolitan financiers met at Cape Town to see that the object of the war should be obtained. They formed there the combine known as the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, to cut down the wage of the natives to one shilling a day. When the mines were open this was done, and, to ensure success, Lord Milner was urged to increase the Hut Tax on the natives, which he did by 100 per cent. The manœuvre, however, failed, for the Kaffirs held back from the mines. High hopes were then entertained of obtaining a forced labour system, Mr. Chamberlain, when at Johannesburg, giving the scheme every encouragement. But the outcry raised in England stopped the enterprise, and then the mine-owners formulated their demands for Chinese labour, and, as a consequence, there are 45,000 Chinese serfs in the Rand mines to-day.

So the financiers, through raid, and war, and slavery, have obtained their cheap labour. . . . So, too, they hope to have gained control of the political machine, by preventing the influx of a large white working population, which would establish a democratic Government.

¹ Cf. *The Financial Reform Almanack*, 1906, pp. 14-15. This source, though composed not in 1904 but in 1905, has been chosen because it put Opposition's one-sided story of 1895-1904 fairly succinctly and because it shows Opposition's ability to produce, in the particular South Africa case, a "democratic" and anti-capitalist passion rivalling that of "Independent Labour".

But it is time to turn from following the history of "Chinese slavery" outside the walls of Parliament to Opposition's most characteristic activities within those walls during the 1904 Session. On the Army Estimates, for instance, it may be noted that Opposition protested loudly against the expense of the "unnecessary war" then being conducted in the deserts of British Somaliland against the "Mad Mullah", and at one point Opposition had the delight of reducing Government's majority to 14.¹ On the Navy Estimates, again, Opposition urged, as against Government's heavy demands for a British Fleet at least the equal of the combined fleets of the next two naval Powers (the "Two Powers Standard"), the policy of approaching the other Great Powers and negotiating a common reduction of naval forces. Though the Liberal Imperialists could hardly approve the extent to which some of the "extreme Radicals" were prepared to go, an armaments negotiation amendment raised a vote of 122 against 174 on February 29th.² This was a better Division than those of 87 against 247 and 73 against 273 registered on March 1st and 2nd, when the "extremists" turned from pious disarmament wishes to actually resisting the vote for as many as 131,100 seamen for the Fleet and £6,691,000 for their pay.

Budget Day, April 19th, saw Opposition's hostility called out against the Budget of Austen Chamberlain, Joseph's son, promoted, it was alleged, too young to the Exchequer as a sop to the Tariff Reformers and as a guarantee to his father that there would be no more of the Treasury resistance he had encountered in the past from Hicks-Beach and Ritchie. When, indeed, Austen Chamberlain reported a deficit of nearly £5,500,000 for the past year and estimated a new deficit of £3,820,000 for the financial year just begun unless he were allowed to increase the income tax and the tea and tobacco duties, Opposition members feared a trick.³ They suspected that the Budget had been constructed to play into the hands of Tariff Reformers, ready to assure all classes that there would have been no deficits and no need for new taxes if only the "foreigner" had been made to pay for "dumping" by Fiscal Reform. Opposition, of course, denounced Government's tremendous increase of expenditure since the happy Liberal days of Gladstone and Harcourt as the real cause of the deficits and fought the Finance Bill of the year with unusual venom. On May 17th,

¹ *Hansard*, February 25th.

² *Ibid.*, February 29th.

³ *Ibid.*, April 19th, for the 1*d.* on income tax, the 2*d.* per lb. on tea and the 3*d.* per lb. on tobacco.

after a two-day attack led by Campbell-Bannerman, Opposition divided against the Finance Bill's Second Reading by 213 against 297 while an all-night sitting was ultimately necessary to complete the Committee stages. Naturally it was the increase of the tea duty by 2*d.* per pound which awoke the loudest protests from Opposition, and this increase could be condemned both as particularly burdensome to the nation's poorest families and peculiarly inappropriate to the time. Was not 1904 the year the Government had chosen for the alleged "endowment of Drink Interests" which were nevertheless being spared the slightest demand for a compensatory increase of Liquor Taxation? To the very heated disputes on Government's alleged "endowment of the Liquor Trade" by the Licensing Bill of 1904 it is now necessary to turn.

From the time "Liberalism" had become officially "faddist" with the Licensing Bill of 1871, the "Liquor Interest" had undoubtedly been rendering Conservatism excellent service. This service had become even heartier and more continuous after "Local Option" had been inscribed on the "Newcastle Programme" of 1891 without provision being made for "compensation" for interests "ruined" by a locality's adoption of Prohibition. Yet despite the failure of a succession of Liberal "Local Option" Bills, brewers, distillers and publicans claimed to be facing another and more insidious threat to their livelihood. Here and there, throughout the country, Licensing Benches, inspired, perhaps, by the worthy motive of reducing what they considered as "excessive" drinking facilities, had proceeded independently to do "grave injustice" to the Liquor Trade and to create precedents which would prove "fatal" to the whole Brewing, Distilling and Licensee interests of the country.¹ These interests appealed, in the Birmingham area, to Joseph Chamberlain and obtained from him, on August 22, 1903, shortly before he left the Government, an express commitment.

¹ Cf. *Daily Mail Year Book*, 1904, p. 134, for a not unfair account of the position in 1903: "The action tentatively taken by the licensing magistrates in 1902 for the suppression of unnecessary licences underwent important developments in 1903, and led to a great outcry on the part of the 'Trade'. The results of their action were, however, greatly exaggerated, and although the number of licences suppressed was much larger than in previous years, it was nevertheless relatively insignificant. The total number of licences refused (subject to appeal) . . . was . . . 220 (Not required) . . . 201 (Not required, with other grounds) . . . 218 (Other grounds only). Total 638. . . . On the other hand, it is to be noted that many new licences were granted, chiefly in consideration of the 'surrender' of existing licences. . . ."

"I am," he had declared,¹ "in entire accord with my colleagues in their desire to take the earliest opportunity of legislating to prevent an unjust exercise of the discretionary power of magistrates in regard to licensing. . . . The individuals who are threatened with ruin for no fault of their own have a right to protection from the Government or Parliament."

The Licensing Bill, introduced by Government on April 20, 1904, became the subject of hot controversy from the very first. Indeed, it was only by drastic and fiercely denounced use of Closure powers that Ministers were able to force it through the Commons by July 29th and, after the necessary proceedings in the Lords, to bring a most trying Session to an end on August 15th. Ministers could claim for their Licensing Bill that it was based, to a large extent, on the recommendations of the seventeen signatories of the Majority Report of the Liquor Commission of 1896-9. They could claim, too, that if, in common justice, they had provided for compensation to interests that would suffer from the suppression of a licence that had not been abused, that compensation would not burden the public or the rates in the slightest. The source of the Compensation Fund would always be the increased capital value estimated to lie in the licences, that had gained from the removal of competitors. In short, the "Trade" would itself be made to provide the compensations judged proper in the case of a licence suppressed, not for abuse but for redundancy.

It would, of course, be impossible to summarise in a single paragraph all the objections raised by Opposition over months of Parliamentary debate. It was claimed, for example, that crippling fetters had been put on all Licensing Benches because a handful of them had ventured a few timid steps to protect their suffering localities from the horrors which befell districts over-plentifully provided with drinking-dens that sometimes degenerated into thieves' kitchens and bawdy-houses as well.² Then it was asserted that whereas licences to trade in liquor had for centuries been

¹ Cf. *Daily Mail Year Book*, 1904, p. 134.

² The justification for Opposition's allegation of crippling fetters having been put on the Licensing Benches lay in more than the end that had been made of the Justices' power to refuse the renewal of "redundant" licences and the mere substitution, in its place, of the right to recommend such non-renewal to the "compensation authority". Even in cases where Justices sought to rest non-renewal on the "bad character" of particular premises, their action was made more difficult by the completeness of the "safeguards" now offered to those who might lose from the Justices' action or seek to object to it.

issued by the Licensing Benches for a year only, at most, and, then, without the slightest guarantee of renewal, Government's Bill now assumed that there had been a tacit guarantee of such renewal on good behaviour by the licensee. Indeed, in order to justify and bolster up the extravagant capital values that were now being put upon their premises and their "industry" by brewers, distillers and publicans, Government's Licensing Bill, it was claimed, seemed, in effect, to assume that the Justices must continue a pre-1904 licence permanently unless they were prepared to build up the strongest "moral" case against it or, alternatively, recommend it for compensation. Yet for the Justices to be virtually called upon to establish "bad character" instead of licensees to prove good seemed an inversion of the proper order of things, and Opposition was bitterly critical, too, of the alleged half-truths lying behind Government's claim that there could be no objections to a Compensation Fund provided by the "Trade" itself. The mere necessity of contributing to this Fund, it was urged, would obviously reduce the valuation that could be put upon public- and beer-houses both for rating and taxation purposes. The Compensation Fund "to endow the public-house" would, therefore, come from the pocket of the "public" after all, though in the subtly disguised form of a reduction of the rates and taxes that the "Trade" could be made to yield.

It is, perhaps, worth seeing how the "Liquor" issue was being fought in the country while these debates were proceeding at Westminster. The "Drink Question" had never yet brought Opposition much good fortune, for the average working man was still greatly given to "soaking" and all the Temperance effort of generations had failed to replace the public-house as his nearest and most inviting evening-club. When, therefore, the Licensing Bill tempest at Westminster began rising in June and Opposition chose to fight by-elections at Market Harborough and Devonport with candidates, exposed to some dangerous objections, Government supporters had a chance of staying, if they could, the ruinous tide of by-election disasters that had flowed for so long. At Market Harborough Opposition had ventured to nominate one of the most "notorious pro-Boers" in the country, the Honourable Philip Stanhope, who even before he had been ejected from his Burnley seat in 1900 had brought criticism upon himself by opposing his own leaders in his zeal for bringing Rhodes and

Chamberlain to "justice" over the Jameson Raid. When on June 17th Stanhope held the Market Harborough seat for Opposition with a considerably larger poll and majority,¹ one of Government's best opportunities of staying the by-election rot had certainly ended. But there was still a chance at Devonport, where a large Admiralty contractor with strong local interests had been nominated to keep together Government's tiny majority of the last election against the "adventurous cockney carpet-bagger", J. W. Benn, whose "Socialist" record on the London County Council, endeared him as little to some parts of the electorate as his pronounced "Temperance" views to others. Here is what the "cockney carpet-bagger", with a political reputation freely bespattered by his enemies, ventured to say on the Licensing Bill despite the hostility of the "Trade".²

"I am not ashamed to say," he declared, "that I stand before you as a keen advocate of the temperance cause. I trust I am not what is called a 'bigoted teetotaller', but I give evidence to my temperance principles by being a total abstainer. I would ask you in all seriousness what have the licensed trade done that they should be petted and aided and abetted by the Government. Are not the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker as respectable and as useful as the vendor of strong drinks? I deplore very much that the old days of the respectable publican who was proud of his house and of the way he kept it, and who saw that it was a place of refreshment for man and beast, in the proper sense of those words, has been superseded by the great liquor syndicates. What they had to do with now was not so much the honest publican as discreditable syndicates fighting for endowments which were not their due. The magistrates, who were not men likely to be moved by the appeals of sentimental fanatics, had reduced the licences by one in 300, and the Government brought in a specious Bill to safeguard the trade. This was not a total abstiners' question; it was a question for all Radicals and Democrats, for the issue was whether the licensed trade should rule the country, or whether they should rule their country themselves. . . ."

It seems doubtful whether all this would have availed Benn very much in a hard-drinking dockyard town if it had not been for continuous pressing of the "Free Trade Question", the "Chinese Labour Question" and the "Education Question". Then there were his professions of the orthodox Radical creed: manhood suffrage,

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1901 and 1905. In 1900 Opposition's vote had been 7,269 and its majority 1,323. In 1904 despite the candidature of Stanhope the vote rose to 7,843 and the majority to 1,733.

² A. G. Gardiner, *John Benn and the Progressive Movement*, pp. 294-5.

easier registration, the holding of all elections on one day, the abolition of the veto of the House of Lords, Disestablishment, reform of the land laws, and the freeing of all schools from sectarian tests. Moreover Benn found it essential to make a direct appeal to the economic interests of the two largest blocks of voters in the constituency—the naval and dockyard men. Kearley, the Liberal member for Devonport, whom Benn was seeking to join in replacement of a Conservative, had held his seat since 1892 mainly on his reputation as a ventilator of the grievances of the lower deck and the dockyard employees. Benn, therefore, thought fit to write this in his election address:¹

I shall esteem it an honour to second Mr. Kearley's efforts on behalf of such men as warrant officers, engine-room artificers, writers, petty officers, stokers, seamen, general labourers and pensioners. I stand for the direct employment of labour and against the starving of the Government yards in order to increase the emoluments of the great contractors. And may I add to this list, as Mr. Chamberlain has dropped the phrase—"old age pensions" for the deserving worker.

Here was not only a promise to endeavour to get more shipbuilding done at Devonport's Admiralty dockyards but a side-thrust at Benn's opponent, Sir John Jackson, a great private contractor for constructing Admiralty harbours and docks. There was naturally no mention of the painful experience of centuries proving that Government shipbuilding and constructional work was always much more expensive and nearly always much more hidebound than that of private contractors, who had had a schooling in what it was to satisfy the demands of the "open market".

Devonport's polling of June 20th converted a Government majority of 3,785 against 3,757, registered in 1902, into an Opposition majority for Benn of 6,219 against 5,179. There followed the usual gleeful demonstrations on the Opposition side of the House and the usual confident shouts calling upon the Government to resign. Benn's election, too, was held to show the "country's particular dislike for the Licensing Bill and to justify Opposition's determined attempt to destroy by obstruction a measure on which, it was claimed, Government had been given no "mandate" even amid the "fraudulent" triumphs of 1900. Opposition claimed to find additional support for its intransigence in the result of another by-election at Chertsey on June 6th when, though a

¹ A. G. Gardiner, *John Benn and the Progressive Movement*, pp. 295-6.

Conservative had been returned owing to two Liberal candidates coming forward, the General Election figures of 5,367 for Government against 3,080 for Opposition had been turned into figures of 5,425 for Government, 4,827 for one Opposition candidate and 4,529 for the other.

The "virtual triumph" claimed by Opposition at Chertsey did not, of course, tend to reduce obstruction on the Licensing Bill. On July 11th, therefore, Mr. Balfour surrendered the hope of passing another of the main Government Bills of the Session, the Aliens Bill,¹ in order to concentrate the flagging energies of Government's bruised and battered majority on the Licensing Bill and the Education (Local Authority Default) Bill. The last-named will soon be dealt with, and of the Aliens Bill it may be said in passing that it represented Government's plan for "protecting" the British poor from the "cut-throat" competition for work and house-room of "pauper" aliens, who had hitherto been able to land not merely without money but even in a dangerously diseased condition.² In view, however, of the "lawless" defiance of their Education Act duties undertaken by some of the more Radical of the local authorities of Wales, it had to be the Education (Local Authority Default) Bill on which Government's energies were concentrated after the Licensing Bill had been sent to the Lords. It was obviously less damaging to Ministers to defer the enactment of the Aliens Bill to 1905 than to allow Radical local authorities to continue their long refusal to execute their duties under the Education Act. And fortunately for Ministers it had been relatively simple to devise a measure of one clause and three subsections under which Exchequer and Local Taxation grants-in-aid of education might be transferred, in the case of defiant local authorities, to the "voluntary schools" up to the limit of their claims. In short, the "voluntary schools" would still, as Opposition had it, "be quartered on the rates" from the necessity under which the defiant authorities would lie of calling for supplementary rates to replace the amount of Exchequer grant they had forfeited and which had been paid to the "voluntary schools" direct.

Before the Session's closing struggles on the Education (Local

¹ Cf. *The Times*, July 12th, for Balfour saying that at the rate of progress being made on this Bill—half a line a day in the Standing Committee on Law—there was no hope of its completion before the prorogation.

² Cf. *Hansard*, April 25th, for the Division of 117 against 241.

Authority Default) Bill are disposed of, some mention should be made of the several side-issues which Opposition was assiduous in raising in the tireless effort further to embarrass Government. They varied from the charge that Ministers, in the effort to excuse their gross and repeated failures with Army Reform, had flown a kite for Conscription¹ to the demand for a Vote of Censure because two members of the Cabinet had accepted office in Mr. Chamberlain's new and Protectionist Liberal-Unionist Council.² Naturally, much was made of the "voice of the nation" which, it was claimed, had called out so long and so loudly for Ministers' resignation and was still calling for it. Ministers had certainly been embarrassed by the Oswestry by-election of July 26th when the "pro-Boer", A. H. Bright, had won a Government seat by signally reversing a heavy defeat he had sustained in 1901.³ The Oswestry result, in fact, encouraged Opposition's plan to make Government's passage of the brief Education (Local Authority Default) Bill as difficult as possible since Oswestry, from its proximity to Wales, had heard much of the "oppression" which Government was designing against the Welsh populations whose "conscience" had required them to instruct their County Councils and other authorities to decline to execute parts of the Education Act of 1902. On August 5th, indeed, when the Commons went into Committee on the Default Bill, 176 amendments were down for consideration on this short measure of one clause and three subsections, and trouble broke out as soon as the Closure was applied on the first. Opposition challenged the speed with which the Conservative Chairman of Committees had accepted the Closure motion, and Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, Ivor Guest and A. H. Bright, led a three-hour wrangle with the Chairman on the question whether sufficient attention had been given, in the Closed discussion, to the problems of deficient light and air in Welsh "voluntary schools". The incident ended with the Chairman compelled to "name"

¹ Cf. *Nineteenth Century*, July 1904, pp. 1-27, for the discussion still proceeding on the recommendation of the Majority Report of the Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers. Though Government denied any intention to make Conscription proposals (*Hansard*, June 2nd, Arnold-Forster, Secretary for War, in answer to Mr. Samuel) some suspicion remained.

² Cf. *Hansard*, August 1st, for the debate that was finally granted Campbell-Bannerman because on July 14th Lords Lansdowne and Selborne had been elected Vice-Presidents of the new Liberal-Unionist Council under Mr. Chamberlain as President.

³ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1902 and 1905, for Bright's poll of 4,542 against 4,157 in 1904, a contrast to the poll of 3,430 against 4,518 in 1901.

Opposition members and Asquith leading a march of Opposition out of the House as a protest against the mode in which it had been decided to push the measure through "without adequate discussion".¹

Government's Sessional troubles were now nearly over though two by-election results remained as possible sources of chagrin before prorogation came on August 15th. The Reading by-election of August 6th was almost a relief to Ministers, for Rufus Isaacs, succeeding a Palmer against a Government candidate also known to the constituency, held the seat for Opposition by a majority reduced from 239 to 230. There was chagrin enough, however, in the N.E. Lanark result for Government not only lost the seat to an "extreme Radical" but its candidate suffered a heavy loss of votes while the competing polls of the Radical and "Labour" candidates showed very large increases.² But politicians of experience are a tough race, inured to chagrin, and there was a doubtless grim pleasure in the thought that Opposition, for all its boasts of being the choice of the "people", was powerless to prevent the prorogation of Parliament on August 15th for what might prove six months of Recess, six months more for Opposition "to wander in the wilderness" and for Ministers to enjoy freedom from Parliamentary storms.³ In a period of such length, moreover, there was always a chance that "public sentiment" might take a turn for the better and offer Ministers the opportunity of dissolving Parliament with brighter prospects than could honestly be forecast at the moment.⁴ There was even a chance that the Russo-Japanese War, raging round Port Arthur and in Manchuria, might furnish Government with the opportunity of gaining some credit through the firm maintenance of British neutral rights against the cruisers of the

¹ Cf. *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Morning Post*, *Westminster Gazette*, *Daily News* and *Daily Chronicle*, August 6th, for diverse comment. The three first organs, all of Government complexion, affected to ridicule and condemn the demonstration while the three Opposition organs regarded it as justifiable and noteworthy.

² Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1902 and 1905, for the figures of the N.E. Lanark by-elections of 1901 and 1904. In 1901 the Government candidate had received 5,763 votes against the 4,769 of the Liberal and the 2,900 of a Labour and Socialist miners' leader. In 1904 the Government vote had sunk to 4,677 while the Radical had risen to 5,619 and the Labour vote to 3,984.

³ The Recess did, indeed, last until February 14, 1905.

⁴ Cf. *Nine Years Work, A Review of the Legislation and Administration of the Conservative and Unionist Government, 1895-1904*, issued by the Conservative Central Office in July 1904. It was an obvious preparation for a possible Dissolution in better circumstances than any that had yet presented themselves.

very unpopular Tsarist navy.¹ Certainly, much of the Recess clatter, raised by Opposition on the subject of Chamberlain's alleged domination of the Government and Balfour's alleged helplessness, seemed to matter less after astounding news came in of a Russian naval attack on British fishermen in the North Sea. But these events of October 22nd, and their consequences, must be left to the next chapter.

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1905, p. 391, for this entry under July 13, 1904: "The Russian Volunteer Fleet stopped and seized the P. and O. steamer *Malacca* in the Red Sea; and on the 16th the British steamer *Allanton* was seized by the Vladivostok squadron."

CHAPTER XXII

WHY MR. BALFOUR RESIGNED

"In the past four years I have been ashamed of, as the nation is now disgusted with, the administrative blunders, departmental scandals, appalling waste, and political evasion and dishonesty of the late Government. Elected to carry on a war, wanton, desolating and unnecessary, that Mr. Rhodes planned, Dr. Jameson initiated, and Mr. Chamberlain did not, could not, would not, or dare not, avert, they have used their office for subsidising their friends and giving doles to their sectional supporters. At their hands the interests of high politics have been subordinated to low finance.

"In the late Government monopoly had a pliant tool, vested interests a ready friend, and sect, clique, and liquor trade a generous supporter at the national expense. It exhausted so much of the treasure on South African financiers and their immoral schemes that it left the whole of the nation depressed, many forgotten, and thousands workless, by spending the national taxes for the benefit of the wrong people.

". . . Over-officered, over-governed, costly, dominated by a sordid unpatriotic section of speculating slave-owners, South Africa will have to be rescued from economic dissolution, and perhaps from disloyalty to the Empire, by immediate, responsible, and representative government, not gerrymandered by mining speculators. . . . The present Government can be relied upon to administer South Africa fairly . . . despite the collusive heritage of difficulty the Tory Ministry and the mine-owners have craftily transferred, I still believe that Chinese labour is unnecessary for Africa, especially in the enslaved, indentured, abominably treated form in which it now exists."

From the Election Address of the Rt. Hon. John Burns,
January 1906.

FROM the time Russia and Japan had begun their bitter war in the Far East early in February 1904, there had been a possibility that some war-incident might divert the whole course of British politics. The Russian Government was widely hated in England as a cruel tyranny that had lately taken to oppressing the Finns as Poles and "Liberal" Russians had already long been oppressed.¹ It was hated, too, because of its ruthlessly expansionist policy in Asia which, apart from seeking to give Britain as much anxiety as possible on India's borders, had threatened the engulfment of China, Korea and Japan.² In Russian official circles, on the other hand, there was the bitterest dislike of England on account of the help in finance and naval armament that Japan had obtained there,³ and because of the Anglo-Japanese "alliance" that Britain had signed in 1902 after Russia, frequently in association with Germany and France, had forced the Far Eastern pace to England's detriment. Certainly, the Anglo-Japanese "alliance", while furnishing Britain with the means of countering further Russo-German "plots" in China, had given Japan the assurance of being able to fight Russia singlehanded since a "Yellow Peril" call from Russia to Germany or France would, if acted upon, mean a British entry into the war.

After the remarkable Japanese successes in the opening months of the war, successes enthusiastically applauded in England, there was bound to be trouble about the Russian Government's straining of international law to get big Black Sea ships past the Dardanelles as merchant-vessels before commissioning them as cruisers, to stop possible contraband traffic through the Suez Canal to Japan.⁴ There was even worse trouble when the

¹ Cf. Carl Joubert, *Russia as it really is*, for the book in whose pages many Englishmen found confirmation of their anti-Tsarist feelings.

² Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1904, p. 382, for October 8, 1903, as a decisive date: "This date, fixed for the evacuation of Manchuria by Russia, passed without change, the Russians still remaining in possession of the treaty port of Niu-Chang and the customs revenue. The war preparations by Japan and Russia caused great apprehension."

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 1905, p. 387, under January 10, 1904: "Two new Japanese cruisers left Genoa for the East. Both the cruisers were under the command of Englishmen."

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 642: "Serious questions with neutrals, especially with England, arose out of the proceedings of the Russian fleet. First may be mentioned the operations of the Volunteer cruisers *Petersburg* and *Smolensk* which after passing the Bosphorus under the commercial flag, hoisted the war flag and claimed the right to search neutral merchantmen. . . ."

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Vladivostok squadron sank a considerable British ship, the *Knight Commander*, on July 23rd, in the course of a raid on Japanese shipping. British Ministers, however, understood the Russian Government's difficulties somewhat better than the "public" and, while not above taking advantage in Tibet and Persia of Russia's troubles, exercised a commendable restraint in regard to maritime incidents which, if allowed to provoke an Anglo-Russian crisis, would only profit Germany. And then came the notorious night of October 21st-22nd when the Russian Baltic Fleet, sailing through the North Sea on its tremendous journey to attempt the reversal of Japanese naval supremacy in the Pacific, made a series of criminally stupid errors near the Dogger Bank fishing-grounds. Russian navigation was so poor that the fleet was sailing some thirty miles off its intended course. And seeing unexpected Hull trawlers engaged in night-fishing, Russian sailors, aware that France was about to furnish them with very "unneutral" aid all along their course, jumped to the conclusion that the "treacherous" British were doing the same for Japan and that the fishing-trawlers they saw were really disguised Japanese torpedo-boats waiting to destroy them. Fire was opened by the Russians on the defenceless fishing-craft of which one was destroyed and others damaged with a casualty-list, in all, of two fishermen killed and several wounded.

The country's rage, when the news became known, was such that Ministers again showed commendable restraint in refraining from the kind of forceful action that would have been immensely popular though war would have resulted. No dramatic order was given for Lord Charles Beresford and the Channel Fleet to halt the Russian ships for the surrender of the officers guilty of the "murder" of two British fishermen.¹ After such suggestions, indeed, had been made, it seemed almost tame for Mr. Balfour, addressing his party conference on October 28th at Southampton, to give the details of the settlement that had been reached with the Russian Government. According to Mr. Balfour, that Government had expressed profound regret, had promised liberal compensation and had agreed to detain the accused Fleet at Vigo for the return of the officers implicated. Mr. Balfour also mentioned an International Commission of Inquiry in terms that the British "public" took to be part of its satisfaction and to which it promptly assigned the function of trying and sentencing the Russian officers responsible

¹ Cf. *Nineteenth Century*, December 1904, p. 1048.

for the "Dogger Bank outrage", the Russian fleet staying at Vigo meanwhile. There was, therefore, an even more alarming outburst of British rage when it was found that the Russian Admiral on arrival at Vigo attempted to justify the action his fleet had taken, and when the Russian Government maintained that the Inquiry Commission, so far from trying and punishing, was to hear both sides, without prejudice, and make recommendations which the Russian Government, like the British, would examine without being committed. So far, too, were the Russian Ministers from considering themselves pledged to keep their fleet at Vigo until the Inquiry was over that they ordered it to sail on without delay, leaving four officers only at the disposal of the Inquiry Commission.

In the wild outburst of popular anger that followed on the "public's" discovery of the official Russian attitude, war came even nearer than it had been immediately after the "outrage", and Ministers found it wise to let the fuming nation know that provisional naval orders had been given for the Home, Channel and Mediterranean Fleets to prepare to co-operate.¹ Russian Ministers were now sobered into a realisation that they could not presume endlessly on the long-suffering of the London Cabinet, however reluctant it might be to play the German game of increasing Russia's weakness and the embarrassments of Russia's ally and Britain's new "good friend", the French Republic.² By November 9th, indeed, Russian "moderation" had reached a point that enabled Lord Lansdowne to tell the customary Guildhall assembly of "Lord Mayor's Day" that he was hopeful of a full and satisfactory settlement. And the worst was certainly over when the Russians were persuaded by their French allies to abandon the making of difficulties on the subject of procedure at the Inquiry Commission and to endeavour to meet British "impatience" by agreeing to allow the Inquiry to open at Paris as "early" as December 22nd.

It must be admitted that circumspect and restrained as British Government action had been throughout, much more temporary

¹ Cf. *Nineteenth Century*, December 1904, p. 1035, for an impression of the "crisis" as experienced in New York: "The newspaper placards blazoned alarm in the largest of red letters; the headlines in the newspapers themselves could scarcely have been bigger if fighting had actually begun, and the telegrams from London and Paris were full of warlike movements and preparations."

² Russia would doubtless have had a case for demanding French assistance, if "attacked" by a second power in addition to Japan.

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popularity would have been won by "forceful" action of a kind that would probably have made war unavoidable. Indeed, Opposition which would inevitably have complained of Government's "war-mongering" had Ministers taken the "forceful" course, saw reason for self-congratulation in the fact that neither Mr. Balfour nor Lord Lansdowne could "claim to have achieved anything that can be described as a triumph in their negotiations with the astute Ministers of the Tsar".¹ By-election results were certainly not improved by suspicions on the part of the "public" that Ministers were being repeatedly overreached by the hated "trickery" of St. Petersburg. Indeed, the West Monmouthshire poll of November 3rd and the Horsham poll of November 21st could easily be represented as among the most "disastrous" for Government of all that had taken place of late months.² It was obvious that Ministers would once again have to defer the Dissolution indefinitely and set themselves to make final decisions as to the kind of legislative programme for 1905 that might raise their electoral chances to something better than overwhelming defeat.

From the point of view of a General Election, the putting of their "obstructed" Alien Immigration Bill of 1904 back into a leading place for the Session of 1905, offered Ministers one of their best prospects. For more than a generation, there had come from London's East End and the poor quarters of some of the greater provincial cities, especially Leeds,³ loud complaints particularly directed against the stream of immigrant Jews alleged to be "pouring" into the country from Russian Poland. These complaints naturally grew louder in such "bad times" as those the country had been experiencing since 1901, and certainly many of

¹ Cf. *Nineteenth Century*, December 1904, pp. 1036-7, for an Opposition view that took care to rub this in, saying: "Just as, after we had been promised by our own Ministers that the Baltic Fleet was not to leave Vigo until the persons primarily responsible for the outrage had been discovered and detained—a promise that was certainly not fulfilled by the recall to St. Petersburg of four subordinate officers of the fleet—so now it was shown that, in spite of the reassuring statements made in England, the reference to the International Commission was not to be so complete as we had been led to expect. This disagreement has now, happily, been settled by the adoption of an ingenious form of words which apparently implies that it may have been the lamb rather than the wolf that was to blame. . . ."

² Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1901 and 1905. In West Monmouthshire, vacated by the death of Harcourt, a far from distinguished Miners' leader, fighting as a "Lib-Lab", succeeded in raising Harcourt's poll from 5,976 to 7,995, and at Horsham, presented to Government unopposed in 1900, Opposition raised a vote of 3,604 against 4,388.

³ Cf. R. H. Sherard, *The White Slaves of England*, Section entitled "The Slipper-Makers and Tailors of Leeds" for the complaints of these operatives.

the "poor" were convinced by their own often contradictory arguments. Sometimes the Jewish immigrant figured as a certain charge upon the rates because arriving penniless and diseased, and sometimes he figured, none the less, as an ant-like worker, able to toil for longer hours, in worse conditions and at lower pay than the poor Englishman whom he put out of work. And though immigrants' willingness to sleep even under kitchen tables constituted one of the elements in the indictment against them, other indictments were based on their alleged ability to outbid Englishmen in the matter of house-rents and so drive them not merely out of employment but out of their very homes.¹ Lord Salisbury had always had some High Tory sympathy with the East End's case and, later, Joseph Chamberlain had come to appreciate the political profit it might bring to offer the "poor" some protection. A Royal Commission had been set up on whose Report, it was claimed, Government had based legislation which, if putting some checks on the completely uncontrolled immigration of the past, was still most liberal in the eyes of everybody except Opposition. Truth to tell, there were those in the East End and elsewhere who thought that altogether too much liberality was still to be shown to aliens desiring entry.²

What threatened to put Opposition in a worse position for resisting Government's Alien Immigration legislation was the continuance of very bad "winter distress" in the months preceding the opening of Parliament on February 14, 1905. It was this severe "winter distress", especially in the London area, which induced Ministers to give early thought to the "unemployed", by forming a Central Unemployed Committee for London, advising the formation of local Distress Committees and, finally, putting an Unemployed Bill on to the agenda for the 1905 Session.³ A third

¹ Cf. *The Times*, May 16, 1902, for the evidence of J. L. Silver, Alderman of Stepney, and A. T. Williams of the L.C.C. before the Alien Immigration Commission.

² Cf. Olive C. Malvery, *Baby Toilers* (1907), pp. 84-5: "There were in 1906, 385,835 aliens, born abroad, who were settled in this country; how many more have come in since that time, one need not trouble to discuss. But while they prosper and their children reap the benefit of our schools and hospitals, our children are thrust into slavery because of these strangers whom we let loose upon them. . . ."

³ Cf. G. Haw, *Will Crooks*, pp. 232-3: "The winter of 1904 was made memorable to him (Crooks) by the creation of the Central Unemployed Committee. For several years he had urged that the Poor Law Unions of London should be empowered to form a central committee. . . . With the several unions acting separately, confusion and waste followed on well-meaning efforts. The genuine

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leading subject for legislation suggested in the King's Speech of February 14, 1905, was the Redistribution of Parliamentary representation, and, on the Government side, it was hoped that this might bring Government more tactical advantage even than the other two. The Catholic population of Ireland had not only been shrinking relatively to that of the rest of the United Kingdom but even absolutely so that its continued representation by some 83 Home Rulers had become one of the leading representational anomalies in the country. To ask, indeed, why Kilkenny City with 1,527 voters, Newry with 1,810, and Galway City with 2,250 should enjoy the same representation as Romford with 44,012 voters, Walthamstow with 33,394 and Wandsworth with 29,846 was to put one aspect, not only of the Redistribution Question, but of the "Irish Question" in a form particularly calculated to make grave difficulties for Opposition.¹ Ministers were, in fact, putting forward a "democratic" case for reducing the Irish Nationalist representation to, perhaps, 60, not so much for the sake of representational accuracy as in the hope of bringing the "Irish Question" into the forefront of the electoral battle. With Opposition still torn between Rosebery's refusal and Campbell-Bannerman's acceptance of Home Rule as an immediate Liberal objective,² with some striking writing from a Catholic layman available to "prove" the Catholic Bishops to be the real masters of "Home Rule Ireland"

unemployed received little real help. Few public men took his scheme for a central organisation seriously at first. He was well-nigh worn out with his failures when unexpectedly the then President of the Local Government Board came to his aid. Crooks, with several other Members of Parliament, had waited on Mr. Long in deputation. The result was the calling together of the famous Unemployed Conference at the Local Government Board on October 14, 1904. To that Conference the Poplar Guardians sent Crooks and Lansbury, armed with a series of carefully-thought-out proposals. Some of them found a ready acceptance on the part of Mr. Long. . . . Almost immediately after the Whitehall Conference Mr. Long formed a Central Unemployed Committee for London, personally arranging that Crooks and Lansbury should become members. . . ."

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1906, pp. 137-47, for the figures of registered voters in each constituency in 1905.

² Cf. *Nineteenth Century*, August 1904, p. 327, for one anti-Nationalist Liberal: "The writers who announce that Home Rule must be the burning issue at the next General Election, and who condemn as opportunists those who think otherwise, are themselves the worst of all opportunists. For the sake of gaining the support of Mr. Redmond at the General Election they are prepared not only to repel the Unionist Free Traders who desire to join hands with them in the battle over the food tax, but to impose upon the neck of the next Liberal Government the intolerable and degrading yoke of an alliance with that Irish party which strenuously upholds the Education Act, approves of the Licensing Bill, and cares nothing about Free Trade. . . ."

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and the real drags on the country's "progress",¹ there certainly seemed some chance of using Redistribution to lead up to an election in which the "Home Rule dangers" of a Liberal victory could be suitably pressed. If only the country could be persuaded to direct its attention away from Opposition's ceaseless clamour on South Africa, Food Taxes and the Education Act, to the thought of what "the next Liberal Cabinet", dependent on over-valued Irish votes, might have to do in the direction of "Home Rule" and strategical self-enfeeblement in Ireland, the best Liberal chances of a great majority might be destroyed.

That the chances of such a majority were now mounting was, however, plainly proved by the result of the first three by-elections of 1905, the by-elections most immediately preceding the reopening of Parliament. Of three seats won by Government in 1900, two were lost to Opposition by large majorities, and, in the third case where Government had been blessed with an exceptional candidate, there was a sensational reduction of the majority and a very close poll.² It was a situation that encouraged Opposition to unremitting attack on Ministers in the name of a "people" declared to be weary to death of an Administration clinging to office like limpets after nearly ten years, full of every kind of folly, disaster and wrong. It is, perhaps, hardly worth going into the detail of how Opposition members contrived to "prove" this in regard to all the successive "questions" introduced into the long debates on the Address between February 14th and March 1st.³

¹ Cf. Michael J. F. McCarthy, *Five Years in Ireland, 1895-1900* (8th ed., 1902), and *Priests and People in Ireland* (5th ed., 1905). The German *Allgemeine Zeitung* thought of McCarthy's *Five Years in Ireland* that: "there is no book in the English literature of to-day which has made such an immense sensation".

² Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1901 and 1906. At the Stalybridge election of January 7th, a poll of 3,321 for Government against 3,240 for Opposition was changed into one of 4,029 for Opposition against 3,078 for Government. At the North Dorset election of January 26th a poll of 3,705 for Government against 3,165 for Opposition was similarly turned into one of 4,239 for Opposition against 3,330 for Government. And at Mile End, where Government was fortunate in the possession of H. L. W. Lawson as candidate, a Government majority of 2,440 against 1,280 was reduced to one of 2,138 against 2,060.

³ Cf. *Hansard*, February 14th-March 1st. The Fiscal Question, introduced by Mr. Asquith, brought a Division of 248-311 on February 15th; on February 17th Dr. Macnamara's amendment on the Chinese in South Africa raised 214 votes against Government's 275; Mr. Redmond's motion on Home Rule (and the current Irish "scandal" of the day) brought him the very satisfactory Division of 236 against 286; and on February 23rd an Opposition motion on Army Reform yielded a Division of 207-254. Then Opposition's attack on the Sugar Convention raised a vote of 211 against 276 on February 28th, and there were other amendments on National Expenditure and Irish labourers that were taken to "highly satisfactory" Divisions.

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Nor is it worth saying much more on the difficulties that were made in regard to the Estimates business that followed, difficulties that shall be left to be suggested by the vote of 185 against 259 which was raised on March 29th even against the Army figures suggested by Mr. Arnold-Forster, a War Secretary hitherto not as much harassed by Opposition as his two predecessors.¹ It may be noted, however, that despite the outbreak of a revealing controversy on Home Rule between Lord Rosebery and the Irish Nationalists,² a Brighton by-election of April 5th produced another damaging loss for Government.³ As was inevitable in the circumstances, Mr. Austen Chamberlain's Budget statement of April 10th became the subject of busy Opposition manœuvres and complaint. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had a small surplus of £1,200,000 and proposed to take off 2*d.* per pound from tea and to cancel the stamp duty on bonds and delivery notes. On April 11th and 12th, however, Opposition made difficulties about the level at which the Sugar Duty and the Income Tax were to be maintained,⁴ and after Easter the Coal Export Duty was also under attack.⁵

But, meanwhile, Government had even more ticklish business to attempt against an Opposition criticising Ministers' every step while itself promising a large variety of "democratic" benefits from the Taxation of Land Values,⁶ and the Abolition of Plural Voting at home,⁷ to the cancellation of the Chinese Labour Ordinance abroad. On April 17th, for example, Ministers were denounced by Campbell-Bannerman for moving the renewal of the alleged doles to landlord and parson in the Bill to continue the Agricultural Rates Acts. On April 19th there was even severer denunciation of Ministers who had left the First Reading of two of their most important measures—the Bills on Alien Immigration and the Unemployed—until April 18th, the day before Parliament's adjournment for an Easter Recess that was to last until

¹ The Marquess of Lansdowne and Mr. Brodrick, on whom had been piled the weight of the blame for the early disorganisation and later mishaps of the Boer War.

² Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1906, under March 16, 1905: "Mr. John Redmond, at a meeting in London, repudiated the Irish policy of Lord Rosebery."

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 1901 and 1906, for the absence of an Opposition candidate in 1900 and Opposition's 8,209 votes against 7,392 in 1905.

⁴ Cf. *Hansard*, April 11th and 12th.

⁵ *Ibid.*, May 29th, for a Division of 167 against 200 on the Coal Duty.

⁶ *Ibid.*, April 14th, for C. P. Trevelyan's Taxation of Land Values Bill obtaining a Second Reading after an amendment had been rejected.

⁷ *Ibid.*, June 2nd, for the rejection of a Bill to this effect by 191 votes against 120.

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May 2nd. It was Opposition's case to affirm that proper discussion on these vital yet novel subjects would prove impossible in the time now likely to fall to them and that Ministers plainly intended to force their Bills through by "tyrannous" use of the Closure. That Ministers had suggested a Redistribution Bill and were committed also to difficult legislation on Free Church troubles in Scotland could be cited as further evidence of Government's intention to prevent proper debate on the specially disputable Alien Immigration Bill.

Opposition's objections to the Alien Immigration measure were, in effect, that Government seemed blind to the moral and even material value of the asylum that Britain had so long offered to the politically or religiously oppressed. In the past, it was claimed, such immigrants, even when arriving penniless, had almost invariably contributed more to the country than they had received. And there was already evidence that Jews, who had escaped from the intolerance and oppression of the Tsar,¹ were not so much competing with the British poor as founding new types of industry that increased the variety and extent of the country's production. Government's desire to take power to refuse admission to diseased aliens and to expel those who came into conflict with the law was not, of course, disputed by Opposition which concentrated mainly on the inadvisability of denying entry to all who could not prove that they had, or were in a position to obtain, the means to support themselves and their dependents. Despite Opposition's prolonged and pertinacious struggle against this aspect of the Bill,² it seems doubtful whether Government did not rather gain than lose by it, seeing the serious unemployment and distress still ruling in the poorer quarters of the great towns. Yet if the Leicester unemployed who marched to London in June³ or

¹ The lootings and massacres, associated with the anti-Jewish "pogroms" were well known in England.

² Cf. *Hansard*, June 27th-July 11th, for the Committee stage, punctuated by such relatively narrow Divisions on Opposition amendments as 165-189, 169-215, 145-189, 161-210, 176-239 and 158-215. The struggle would have been more prolonged but for Mr. Balfour's motion to "check obstruction" that was passed on July 5th by 149 votes against 113. It is interesting to find that "Labour" suggested one possible use of the Bill when Keir Hardie moved on July 10th that aliens brought over to take the place of workmen on strike should be excluded. This was rejected by 215 votes against 148. Opposition's case was, perhaps, best summed up in Dilke's amendment of July 10th by which an immigrant would not have been denied entry if he came to avoid the treatment meted out to the religious body to which he belonged. This was rejected by 223 votes against 189.

³ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1906, p. 395, under June 10, 1905.

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the Manchester workless who fought the police on July 31st¹ were hardly likely to share Opposition's enthusiasm for the "right of asylum", they were hardly likely, either, to wax enthusiastic for Government's very modest Unemployed Bill. It is true that the Bill authorised local Distress Committees to meet unemployment by planning, according to the circumstances of affected areas and individuals, Emigration and Migration, the provision of temporary work, and the setting up of Labour Bureaux. But the Act was also, in some degree, an "economy measure", designed to stop unregulated and overlapping "distress" expenditure from three sources at once, the Poor Law Guardians, the Municipal Councils, and the charitable funds raised by newspapers and the Mansion House.² It was for that very reason that the representatives of all three were seated together on the Distress Committees.³ Naturally the "economy" aspect of the Unemployed Bill did not appeal to the "workless" who would, of course, have preferred a fourth and broader stream of "distress" expenditure to begin flowing from the Treasury. The Unemployed Act would, in fact, only have helped Government politically if Ministers had done what their successors decided to do in 1906—place some Treasury Funds at the disposal of the Distress Committees. As it was, their Unemployment Bill helped Ministers no more than the Redistribution Bill which they had suggested at the beginning of the Session but for which they found neither the energy nor the spirit among their harassed supporters.

How forbidding the Government's electoral prospects had become in the later stages of the Session was amply proved by the unvarying stream of by-election adversity. On June 1st an Opposition candidate won the Whitby seat from Government by 4,547 votes against 4,102, though Opposition had not even ventured

¹ *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1906, p. 396, under July 31, 1905: "Conflict in Manchester between the police and a procession of the unemployed."

² Cf. *Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws*, 1909, p. 451, for an indication that Borough Councils (of the Poplar and West Ham type) were causing special anxiety because their programmes of "distress expenditure", if claimed as being only the normal municipal programmes, anticipated and improved, were under none of the Local Government Board checks imposed on the Guardians.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 426, according to which the Act "aimed at combining members of municipal, Poor Law and charitable bodies into a new and special local authority, whose normal duty was to watch, so to speak, for the approach of unemployment in their district, and whose abnormal duty was to provide help for the better class of unemployed workmen under conditions which, it was hoped, would avoid some of the evils which had arisen through the unregulated provision of work by the municipalities and charitable agencies."

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a contest in 1900.¹ Next day Chichester yielded a result that was no more cheering, for Government's candidate, Lord Edmund Talbot, just appointed a Ministerial Whip after sitting for the division since 1894, had only been able to repel Opposition's attack by 4,174 votes against 3,762, despite a constituency dominated by the "influence" of his brother, the Duke of Norfolk, of another Conservative Duke, his Grace of Richmond, and Chichester Cathedral.² And on June 29th a division, where there was no such exceptional Conservative buttressing, yielded another of those results that must have appalled Government tacticians, attempting to forecast what would happen in the event of a Dissolution. At East Finsbury Opposition, defeated in 1900 by 2,174 votes against 1,827, completely turned the tables on Government, and won the seat by 2,320 votes against 1,552.³ Nor did Kingswinford, in the Midland area, supposed to be specially under Chamberlain influence, produce a more cheerful prospect on July 5th. It was no particularly good omen that Opposition should be able to poll 4,887 votes against 5,490 in this division left to Government uncontested in 1900.

After this preamble it should not, perhaps, be difficult to see why, when once the Parliamentary Session was ended on August 11th, Ministerial hopes came more and more to be centred on attempts to exploit the undoubted divisions among Government's opponents. The varied forces in the "Labour Movement" were, for example, propounding the most ambitious electoral plans which, often enough, threatened to "split the Opposition vote" and nearly always offered the material for alarming "the lower middle classes" whether the projected candidates were "extremists" of the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party or allegedly "moderate men" nominated only by Trade Unions and Labour Representation Committees.⁴ Yet to judge from past experience, it was doubtful whether the "country" could be got to take the "Socialist menace" at all seriously until the "Socialists" should have become a party of some obvious

¹ *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1906, p. 144.

² *Ibid.*, p. 139.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁴ Cf. *The Reformers' Year Book* for 1906 and 1907 for the best close view of the electoral and political ambitions of the "Labour" of the day. One of the Joint Editors was F. W. Pethick-Lawrence, an ex-Fellow of Trinity, destined to take a part of some prominence in the pre-1914 agitation for Women's Suffrage and in the post-1918 "advance of Labour to power".

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strength in Parliament. It was, in fact, with the Irish Nationalist "menace", represented by a party of over 80 M.P.s which had frequently held the balance of power in Parliament, that Ministerialists saw their best chance of alarming the country as to the "certain" catastrophes that would follow their own defeat. Yet so long as Government remained in office, the "perils" of "Rome Rule" to Irish Protestants and of "Fenian" administration to British communications were bound to appear remote and unreal. It was only if Government left office and Nationalist "blackmail" of a Liberal Administration opened in earnest that the whole seriousness of the "Irish Question" seemed likely to be brought home to a country still, in the Ministerial view, kept artificially agitated by Opposition's "unscrupulous" exploitation of the shrill outcry against "Food Taxes" and "Chinese Slavery".

There were other reasons which made it seem certain that, if only Ministerialists could find a plausible reason for resigning, their electoral chances would improve. On general grounds it could be argued that Opposition's great advantage was that of being on the offensive against an ever-lengthening record of Ministerial administration and legislation. To force a change of rôles on Opposition before Government's record was lengthened by a 1906 Session, to put a Liberal Government under fire as soon as, or even before, it was formed, seemed to offer particular as well as general advantages. The quarrel between Liberal Imperialism and Campbell-Bannerman's "Tabernacle" would be forced to an immediate issue, and as likely as not, Campbell-Bannerman would find it quite impossible to accept the Liberal-Imperialists' terms of their own chosen offices for themselves, Campbell-Bannerman's relegation to the Lords as a merely nominal Premier and the refusal of immediate or definite Home Rule commitments to the Irish Nationalists.¹ It must be assumed that Balfour could not have been kept wholly ignorant of the Liberal-Imperialists' ideas as communicated to Knollys, the King's Private Secretary, in July and glanced at later by the King in conversation with Campbell-Bannerman.

Balfour's prospects of being blessed by some Liberal strife were actually improved when Asquith, Grey and Haldane, having virtually abandoned Rosebery as impracticable, made the dubious

¹ R. B. Haldane, *An Autobiography*, pp. 155 et seq.

"Relugas Compact" early in September.¹ There have probably been few more extraordinary attempts by a tiny clique of politicians to share among themselves the spoils of an "uprising of the people" not yet consummated at the polls. It was apparently agreed that, if and when Campbell-Bannerman was summoned to the Palace, the three would stand by one another in a common refusal to serve except on their own exigent terms. Haldane, who had never yet held any office, was to be pushed for the Lord Chancellorship, though Reid, the last Liberal Attorney-General, was available and was Campbell-Bannerman's intimate ally and friend. Grey was to be Foreign Secretary and Asquith Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the Commons. And in order to make Asquith's Leadership possible, Campbell-Bannerman was to agree to the virtual stultification of his Premiership by undertaking to retire to the Lords.² The "Relugas" confederates had undoubtedly put their terms too high both for Campbell-Bannerman himself and for the "extreme Radicals" who, not unaware of the "intrigues" extending even to the Court, were advising Campbell-Bannerman to wash his hands of the "Liberal Imperialists" altogether. Balfour must plainly have seen in all this a variety of ways in which the Liberal leaders might grievously damage their prospects in the very act of taking office.

It was towards the end of November that Rosebery seemed to present Balfour with the best opportunity of resigning he was ever likely to get. On November 23rd Campbell-Bannerman had spoken at Stirling and had advised the Irish to accept any instalment of representative control "provided it was consistent with, and led up to, the larger policy". Apparently this relative caution of tone in regard to Home Rule had been adopted by Campbell-Bannerman in an effort to avoid antagonising the Liberal Imperialists some of whom, but not Lord Rosebery, had been consulted.³ On November 24th, however, Rosebery, in a speech

¹ Cf. R. B. Haldane, *An Autobiography*, p. 158: "We resolved to take some step. Here Asquith and I were more practical than Grey, who hated having to make any move. I went to Asquith at a country house he and his wife had taken . . . in the north-east of Scotland. Grey had a fishing at Relugas only about fifteen miles off. After consultation Asquith and I decided to go over to confer with Grey. . . . It was decided that it was of great importance that the King, who would soon have to summon a new Prime Minister, should be cognisant of the situation. Asquith thought that . . . I would be a natural channel of communication. . . . What we thus resolved on we used afterwards at times to speak of among ourselves as the 'Relugas Compact'."

² *Ibid.*, pp. 157-8.

³ Cf. Crewe's *Rosebery*, ii, 593.

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at Truro, declared that Campbell-Bannerman's words had aroused his misgivings and he went farther next day in a speech at Bodmin. There he objected strongly to what he called the raising of the Home Rule banner in an election wherein Free Trade was the dominant issue. One strong phrase, presented to Government by an orator who was, after all, the Liberal ex-Premier, appeared a godsend to some Ministerialists. Referring to the raising of the Home Rule banner in Campbell-Bannerman's Stirling speech, Rosebery had apparently increased Liberals' Government- and majority-making difficulties by bluntly declaring that, "emphatically and explicitly and once for all, I cannot serve under that banner". Matters must have moved fast in the Ministerial camp after Campbell-Bannerman had been subjected to this seemingly dangerous attack from his former chief. Lord Rosebery's speech was made on November 25th, and by December 3rd Balfour's resignation was complete and Campbell-Bannerman at the Palace.¹

Balfour's step was, of course, plausibly defended on various grounds. Opposition, it was claimed, had brought obstruction at Westminster and misrepresentation in the country to such a pitch that the 1906 Session would have been a most unprofitable one. Only, it was alleged, when a disillusioned country had been revolted by some months, or even years, of misgovernment by "Little Englander" groups owing their control to the most perilous Irish and Socialist alliances, would the full fatuity and recklessness of their conduct during nearly a decade of Opposition be properly understood. Meanwhile, it was announced, those whose unpatriotic opposition had dangerously reduced British prestige abroad and made remedial legislation impossible at home could rely, if sobered by office, on very different treatment from that which they had accorded.

The striking of this noble attitude by ex-Ministers might have had more ultimate effect on the "country" if Campbell-Bannerman had had the difficulties in Cabinet-construction that were, at one time, confidently expected.² Some sections of Liberalism, indeed, expressed keen regret at the absence of Lord Rosebery's name from the final Cabinet list, and ex-Ministers naturally made

¹ *The Reformers' Year Book*, 1907, p. 17.

² Cf. W. T. Stead, *Our New Rulers, The Liberal Ministry of 1906*, p. 21: "Any calculations which Mr. Balfour based upon the possibility of Liberal differences proved to be unfounded."

the most of it.¹ But Rosebery's special friends, the Liberal Imperialists, knew that even if he had not undertaken "self-exclusion" by the Bodmin speech, he would have made an impossible colleague except, perhaps, in the Prime Minister's place. In agreeing to find Cabinet place for Rosebery's son-in-law, Lord Crewe, as President of the Council, and for all the four Vice-Presidents of Rosebery's Liberal League,² Campbell-Bannerman certainly showed a desire to heal old sores without stultifying himself from the very beginning. Even so, there were moments of danger as when Campbell-Bannerman's resentment of some of Haldane's underground activities led him to begin by offering Haldane, not the Woolsack bestowed on Reid, but the Attorney-Generalship, without a seat in the Cabinet.³ The case of Grey promised even worse difficulties for a time because though offered the glittering prize of the Foreign Office, he refused it except on the "Relugas" condition of Campbell-Bannerman's retiring to the Lords. If Asquith, in fear of losing the deputy-Leadership of the Commons, had not already surrendered, Grey's stand might have had important effects though mostly, perhaps, in the direction of weakening the Government's strength for General Election purposes. As it was, it sufficed to bring Haldane into the Cabinet as Secretary for War.

One of Campbell-Bannerman's most fruitful pieces of Government-making was the annexation of famous names. With Gladstone's son in the Cabinet as Home Secretary, with Harcourt's son just outside as First Commissioner of Works and with the Spencer heir at Court as Lord Chamberlain, due reverence had certainly been paid to Liberalism's past leaderships. The nomination of Lord Elgin, an ex-Viceroy of India, as Colonial Secretary and of Lord Aberdeen, an ex-Governor General of Canada, as Irish Lord-Lieutenant, represented a second annexation of "famous names" though, this time, made with an eye, not on the party "Tabernacle", but on the House of Lords, where business would certainly be hard to conduct whatever happened at the General

¹ Cf. *Nineteenth Century*, January 1906, for a strong article from the Liberal Nonconformist, Rev. J. Guinness Rogers, deploring Rosebery's absence. The article was meaningfully called "Tabernacle Versus Nation".

² Cf. W. T. Stead, *Our New Rulers, The Liberal Ministry of 1906*, p. 21, on Grey, Haldane, Asquith and Fowler in relation to Rosebery's "voluntary exclusion from the Ministry" by his "characteristic escapade at Bodmin".

³ Cf. R. B. Haldane, *An Autobiography*, pp. 169-70.

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Election.¹ The addition to the Cabinet of the aged Lord Ripon as Privy Seal, and of Lord Tweedmouth as head of the Admiralty was another of the several indications Campbell-Bannerman gave that he was aware of the need for doing something to prevent the rapid development of critical trouble between the new Government and the Lords.²

For the moment, a more immediate question was that of dressing the window for the General Election, and Campbell-Bannerman must certainly have been pleased by the ample publicity given to the "literary" side of a Cabinet that added to Morley as India Secretary and Bryce as Irish Secretary, the philosophical authorship of Haldane, the critical authorship of Birrell (President of the Board of Education) and the political authorship of Buxton (Postmaster-General).³ Yet the most colourful appointments made by Campbell-Bannerman were those of Lloyd George and John Burns to the Cabinet and of Winston Churchill as Colonial Under-Secretary just outside. Though only thirty-one, Churchill had already learnt the art of making himself a public figure whether by writing or "ratting" and, as for Burns and Lloyd George, their presence in the Cabinet denoted yet another stage in "working-class emancipation". If, by profession, a solicitor, Lloyd George had been brought up in a shoemaker's home and was, perhaps, the first so bred to sit in Cabinet.⁴ There was certainly no doubt but that John Burns was the first ex-orator of Hyde Park and the London street-corners to enter the Cabinet Room. And what one of the keenest contemporary judges of "public opinion", W. T. Stead, thought of the specially electric effect of Burns's appointment may here be quoted.

"The day that he became the Rt. Hon. John Burns," wrote Stead, "his appointment was hailed with more enthusiasm than that evoked by the appointment of all the rest of his colleagues. No fewer than four thousand telegrams rained in upon him. . . . We are all proud of

¹ Elgin had received the Liberal appointment to the Indian Viceroyalty in 1894 and had held it until 1899. Aberdeen had been sent to Canada by Gladstone in 1893 and had stayed until 1898.

² Cf. W. T. Stead, *Our New Rulers, The Liberal Ministry of 1906*, pp. 58-60: "Lord Tweedmouth as Mr. Marjoribanks, had the reputation of being one of the best Whips the Liberal party ever had. He was all things to all men. . . ."

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, Chap. vi, entitled "The Literati" and beginning: "In the Cabinet there are many men who have written books. . . . Mr. Haldane, Sir E. Grey, Mr. Buxton and Mr. Birrell have written books which give them distinction. . . ."

⁴ H. Du Parcq, *Life of David Lloyd George*, i, 13-14.

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him. He is the first working man who has won his way to Cabinet rank. And there is not a man of the whole nineteen Cabinet Ministers who does not feel that the Ministry is stronger, more popular, and more efficient because the Battersea engineer is sitting cheek by jowl with marquises and belted knights in the inner councils of the King. What strange revenges the whirligig of time brings round! It is not five years since John Burns, cricket-bat in hand, stood guard from ten o'clock at night till two in the morning at the door of his own house ready to defend his wife and child against the howling mob of infuriated Jingoos who had smashed his windows and were threatening to loot his house, in the good patriotic fashion so much admired in those days. And now this abominable pro-Boer . . . is President of the Local Government Board, the friend and trusted colleague of the Prime Minister, and one of the conspicuous personal forces in the new Cabinet."

PART TWO

CHAPTER XXIII

SOME "LABOUR" QUESTIONS

Of the Independent Labour Party.

"At the first conference of this body held at Bradford (January 13, 1893) and attended by 115 delegates, Mr. Keir Hardie, M.P., and Mr. Tillett were the most prominent speakers—the former being elected president. At the outset of the proceedings the name to be adopted was a subject of keen discussion, and it was only after a long debate that the title of the 'Socialistic Labour Party' was abandoned; and the object of the party was declared to be 'to secure the collective ownership of all the means of production, distribution and exchange'. The programme, ultimately agreed to, as a preliminary to the attainment of the ultimate aim of the Independent Labour Party, included the following points: the abolition of overtime, piece-work and child-labour, an eight hours' working day, adult suffrage, second ballots, the payment of members and election expenses, the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords, shorter Parliaments, the abolition of indirect taxation, and a graduated income tax. The proceedings of the conference terminated by a religious service of the Bradford Labour Church, held in St. George's Hall, when Mr. Keir Hardie claimed that the balance of power in the country was even then in the hands of the Independent Labour Party."

"The scarcely veiled threat contained in this pronouncement may have forced the Government to hasten on their promised boons to the working classes and to accept with alacrity an interview proposed by the Parliamentary Committees of the Co-operative Union and the Trades Union Congress. It had been rumoured that the President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Mundella) and the Vice-President (Mr. Burt, M.P.) had in view the creation of a Labour Department of the Board of Trade—Mr. Mundella, in confirming this rumour to the deputation (January 24th) explained the objects in view. . . ."

From the *Annual Register*, 1893.

"I received from a correspondent in Liverpool, who is zealously opposing Socialism, the information that *Merrie England* was being eagerly bought and read by the working classes in that city who were described as 'going mad about it'. From time to time I received similar information from other great centres of industry, which was supplemented in some cases by the

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statement that classes were being formed in connection with chapels and institutes to encourage the study of *Merrie England*. . . . I assert unhesitatingly that the Socialistic spirit is immoral and irreligious. . . . It is opposed to the family. . . . It is opposed to the sanctity of the marriage tie, and it is associated, in the lives of multitudes of its exponents, with free love (properly interpreted free lust). . . . As to its irreligious character . . . Mr. Blatchford is himself an atheist. In a recent issue of his paper, *The Clarion*, he said: '*. . . I do not know what Evangelical Christianity is, because I never thought it worth while to inquire.*' And this is the man who is puffed and praised and petted by (so-called) *Christian* journals and by (so-called) *Christian* ministers!"

From G. BROOKS' *God's England or the Devil's?* (June 1895).

THE situation of "Labour" was last treated in the form which it began to assume after the remarkable London Dock Strike of 1889. As was seen in Chapter V, the "New Unionism" of the "unskilled" was mightily encouraged by the success of the London Dockers in obtaining the "docker's tanner". All manner of "new unions" were founded, and, though provided only with the humble subscription-rates open to this class of labour, they adopted ambitious immediate programmes of wage-increases and, often enough, of shorter hours too, which was not surprising seeing the working-day then expected of tram and omnibus employees, to take merely two examples of many.

At first the "New Unionism" won considerable successes and, often, the mere threat of striking sufficed, for "business" was very prosperous between 1888 and 1890 and, rather than risk unpleasant stoppages, its directors usually allowed themselves to be influenced towards a "peaceful settlement" by the then very sympathetic tone of "public opinion" towards the "labouring poor".¹ But even in the "New Unionism's" flood-time of success there was one early example which proved how dangerous could be over-confidence, especially when it took the form of a refusal to consider the interest or convenience of the employer and the public. Among the most ambitiously expanding of the "New Unions" was that of the Gas-Stokers, led by Will Thorne, which, in May 1889, under the style of the Gas-Workers' and General Labourers' Union, had begun recruiting vigorously and in August had won, without a strike, a surprisingly large reduction of working hours though, naturally enough, no great simultaneous pay-increases. Yet early in December one Gas Workers' strike was "gravely inconveniencing the public" of Manchester and Salford, while another, in South London, was intended to reduce to terms Mr. George Livesey, Chairman of the very large South Metropolitan Gas Company.²

¹ Cf. *Annual Register*, 1889, Chronicle, p. 55, under November 16th: "The threatened strike of the London bakers averted by a general agreement of the masters to the men's demands for shorter hours. The employees of the London Road Car Company, who had threatened to strike for twelve hours' work a day, agreed to postpone action, at the request of the directors, until the London General Omnibus Company had decided upon the course it proposed to take in presence of a similar demand. At Burton-on-Trent there was a general strike of the men engaged in the malt-houses for an advance to 8d. per hour. The breweries of Messrs. Bass and others consented to the terms, but other firms having refused the men came out."

² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 59. Under December 4th it reads: "The gas stokers (to the number of about 7,000) of the South Metropolitan Gas Company gave notice of the decision to come out on strike unless certain new regulations as to payment,

But Mr. Livesey was a man of enterprise and ingenuity, as he had already shown when devising the scheme of profit-sharing which had been offered to his men in order to induce them to sign contracts of service intended to guarantee the Company's labour supply for specified periods in advance, whatever the strike contagion that might be reigning among the "New Unionists" outside. In Mr. Livesey's profit-sharing offer, however, the Union detected a plan to win South Metropolitan employees away from the Gas-workers' organisation, and certainly the substitution of monthly or even quarterly contracts of service for engagement by the hour, day or week seemed vastly to reduce the chance of calling sudden strikes which should yet be legal. The Union accordingly ordered its members to strike against Mr. Livesey's "enslavement scheme"¹ but, though he was thus deprived of a very considerable part of his labour force, Mr. Livesey was ready for the emergency. He succeeded in recruiting, housing and training "strike-breakers" altogether more successfully than any of the Dock Companies had done during the previous summer² and, refusing all conciliation or mediation suggestions emerged completely successful early in 1890. Not a single one of his "strike-breakers" was abandoned who desired to stay on; profit-sharing was allowed them also in full measure; and from their gratitude was won a modification of hours, favourable to the Company. And if Mr. Livesey underwent a great deal of attack not merely from "Labour" but also from "advanced progressives", there can be no doubt but that the continued "Labour troubles" of 1890 began to tire an originally complacent part of the "public". Bad rioting in Leeds during the course of yet another Gas-Workers' strike in July persuaded further sections of the "public" that it might not be a bad thing if more employers fought down the "abuses of the New Unionism" in Mr. Livesey's fashion.³ Was there not proof, moreover, of the

contingent on the profits of the company, were withdrawn." Under December 6th the information is as follows: "The stokers, &c., employed by the Manchester and Salford gas works having gone out on strike, the inhabitants were reduced to a limited supply of gas. In many places business had to be abandoned for want of light."

¹ *Illustrated London News*, December 14, 1889.

² *Annual Register*, 1889, Chronicle, under December 13th for: "The gas stokers employed in the South Metropolitan gas works, to the number of about 3,000, came out on strike. Their places were, however, promptly filled by men brought from various parts of the country."

³ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1891, p. 365. Under July 1, 1890, it writes this: "Rioting in Leeds in connection with the gas strike", and under July 2nd it adds: "Further rioting in Leeds: the town in darkness."

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ultimate beneficence of Mr. Livesey's activities in the grateful addresses presented to him and his fellow-directors on September 20th by their contented and profit-sharing employees?¹

The Livesey type of temper towards the "New Unionism" was doubtless reinforced after the contagion of "insubordination" spread, in July 1890, to the police and military as well as to the postal services.² Certainly, determined resistance was soon being organised both to the industrial manifestations of the "New Unionism" and to that "political sentimentality" of the "self-styled progressives" in Parliament, County Council, and School Board which gave it so much alleged countenance. The greatest philosophical name of the individualist Radicalism of the past generation was actually secured for a counter-blast to the "New Unionism", and to the political "Socialism" which buttressed it, when Herbert Spencer consented to write a strong as well as profound introduction to the much-read *A Plea for Liberty, An Argument against Socialism and Socialistic Legislation*.³ It was the beginning of a new wave of anti-Socialist writing which was to have great attractions for many, even of the "benevolent" industrial leaders of that generation. And it is symptomatic of the dangerous enmities which the "New Unionism" had so quickly aroused that one of the most prominent contributors to *A Plea for Liberty* was George Howell, "Gladstonian Labour" M.P. for N.E. Bethnal Green and a founder of the Trades Union Congress and its Parliamentary Committee. Possessed of a singularly extensive knowledge of the history of "Labour", Howell was never tired of contrasting the "New Unionism" with the "Old" and always to the disadvantage of the "New", which he considered lacked caution, self-restraint and the ability, or even the desire, to establish a solid financial basis for its unions. Like other "old hands" of the Trade Union movement, Howell was ruffled by the bluster, noise and self-importance with which a good deal of the "New Unionism"

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1891, p. 367.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 365. Under July 7, 1890, stands this: "Threatened strike of the Metropolitan Police: rioting in Bow Street, and dismissal of 40 men for insubordination", and this: "The men of the 2nd Battalion of Grenadier Guards, quartered in Wellington Barracks, complaining of excessive duty, refused to attend duty." Under July 9th the Almanack says: "Strike of postmen: 250 dismissed or suspended", and under July 11th: "Collapse of the postmen's strike."

³ Spencer significantly entitled his contribution "From Freedom to Bondage", his view being that the individual's liberty would be ended by State Socialism. There were two editions of *A Plea for Liberty* issued in 1891.

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made its first appearance at Trades Councils and the Trades Union Congress. And he could not but doubt of the wisdom which made the "New Unions" the loudest advocates of tremendous social changes like the immediate and compulsory introduction of the "Universal Eight Hours Day" when their members lacked the self-denial to establish the financial basis which would allow their Unions to meet petty bills promptly, let alone finance a strike of any length.¹

It is, perhaps, hardly worth while to go into detail on the T.U.C. debates of 1889 or 1890 and to decide how far the struggles between motions, containing less "Socialism" or more, were really important enough for the voting figures on either side to be scrutinised with care. In his book of 1891 on *Trade Unionism, New and Old*, Howell certainly stripped some "extreme" claims to tatters when he showed how the trade unionists, represented at the T.U.C. of Liverpool in September 1890, should not have been reckoned at 1,810,191 or even 1,470,191, but possibly only at 750,000,² while, if the number of delegates had been brought to a record at 457, "New Unionist" and Socialist manœuvres to assure an "Eight-Hour Day" majority provided one reason.³ These

¹ G. Howell, *Trade Unionism, New and Old*, p. 225: "Useful as they may be, and are, in their way, strikes are not usually won by parades, processions, bands of music, Phrygian caps and flags. The walls of Jericho fell to the sound of the rams'-horns, but miracles like that are not repeated in these modern days. Demonstrations as a rule cost money, as the Socialists found on the 1st and 4th of May 1890; the trades paid their expenses quickly, but the other "demonstrators" had some difficulty. . . . Whatever their value, 'great demonstrations' can never become a substitute for the material forces of the Unions, represented by numbers, and a cash balance sufficient to provide for the necessities of those on strike. If at the end of the first week, the money is not forthcoming wherewith to pay the men, they become disheartened, weak, and vacillating, and they forecast failure and disaster in the end. . . ."

² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 197: "A cursory glance at the returns show that there were gross exaggerations. The Dock Labourers are credited with 56,000 twice over, making 112,000 besides other duplicates; the Gas-workers with 60,000 twice over, making 120,000, besides duplicates. Again, the Dock Labourers' General Union stands for 50,000 men, in addition to the above. The Railway Workers' Union is credited with 40,000, and again with 20,000, exclusive of the Amalgamated Societies representing England and Ireland and Scotland. Then the National Federation of Miners is put down for 120,000 members, the Lancashire Federation for 30,000, the North Wales for 10,000, the North Stafford for 9,500, and the National Union of Miners for 50,000, besides the representation from the different Unions. Then there was the National Labour Federation, 60,000, and the National Labour Union, 40,000. . . . No exaggeration of numbers is needed, nor can it be of permanent avail in labour struggles. . . . Supposing the actual strength was reduced to about three-quarters of a million, it would still be a splendid army of workers, capable of doing great things for labour."

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 195-6, which speaks of "activity in all directions, beating up recruits. . . ."

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manœuvres, according to Howell, went back even farther than the "May Day" celebrations, imported from the Continent by an ephemeral "National Federation of all Trades and Industries" that had been waved into reputed existence by the Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League, and the shadow of whose competition had sufficed to push the London Trades Council into giving an "Eight Hour" lead at a sort of British "May Day" substitute, celebrated on the Sunday after May 1st. But all these manœuvres, though they embittered Howell's soul and made a great deal of clatter, were obviously less decisive in the history of "Labour" than the actual course of the "New Unionism's" trade disputes with employers. Some indications have already been given of the Gas-Workers' not uniformly happy activities, and it is essential that something should be added concerning the two other leading representatives of the "New Unionism", the Dockers' Union and the National Seamen's and Firemen's. Attempting, as these Unions were, to organise some of the "roughest" material in the country, their operations always appeared to much of the "public" to be conducted in a mob-atmosphere of "intimidation and violence" more disquieting than anything experienced, say, from rail or omnibus employees, striking for shorter hours,¹ or even pitmen and blast-furnace workers, never famed for strike-gentleness.²

The dockers were in early trouble and, indeed, the problem of organising into a disciplined National Union all the discontented port-labour of the country was a tremendous one. Some centres had scarce been organised into paying a week's or a fortnight's subscriptions before they were calling lustily for strike-authorisation, and if a Liverpool dock-strike of the spring of 1890 was settled before extremities were reached,³ the same was hardly true

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1891 and 1892, under the following dates:

December 15, 1889 ("Meeting of 5,000 railway servants in Hyde Park to vote for a reduction in the hours of work").

December 22, 1890 ("Railway strike on the principal Scottish railways").

January 3, 1891 ("Evictions of Scottish railway strikers commenced at Motherwell").

January 5, 1891 ("Military called out at Motherwell evictions").

January 23, 1891 ("Mr. Channing's motion on Railway Servants' Hours lost by 141 to 124").

January 29, 1891 ("Scottish railway strike compromised").

June 12, 1891 ("End of omnibus strike; directors' terms (reducing working day to twelve hours) accepted").

² Cf. *Ibid.*, 1892, under February 25, 1891: "Riot at eviction of strikers on Lord Londonderry's Silksworth Collieries, thirty men injured in baton charge."

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 1891, under March 31, 1891: "Strike of dock labourers at Liverpool settled by mutual concessions."

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of Southampton where the strike of September 1890 reached, for a short while, almost the seriousness destined, before long, to make Bristol and Hull Docks notorious.¹ Meanwhile, despite the London conditions established by the Dock-Strike settlement of September 1889, new trouble never seemed far off. In August 1890, for example, the Union aroused tremendous criticism even in "Labour" circles by vainly attempting to secure a monopoly of London dock-labour to its existing members. "Public opinion", of course, was given a good deal of emphatic instruction in the crass "selfishness" of those, who had scarcely formed a Union, before they were busy closing its doors and, it was hoped, all opportunity of working in the trade, to every new-comer whatever his claims or necessities.² Meanwhile, water-side conditions were constantly raising new incidents whether in the shape of the attempted "intimidation" of non-unionists or the threatened refusal to touch goods that had been produced or handled by an industry in which men were on strike. The repeated threat, both at London and in the provinces, to organise a boycott of strike-goods, which should go beyond the refusal of dock-handling to include the refusal of maritime transport as well, seems to have been used most menacingly by J. Havelock Wilson, the organiser of the Sailors' and Firemen's Union.³ Wilson might seem to be

¹ Cf. *Illustrated London News*, September 13, 1890: "Great excitement has prevailed in Southampton in consequence of the strike of dock labourers. The strikers assembled in large numbers on September 9th and prevented officers and workmen from entering the docks. Trams were also stopped. In consequence of the threatening aspect of affairs the magistrates applied for the assistance of the military, and two companies of the Oxfordshire Light Infantry were sent from Portsmouth. They cleared the entrance to the docks by playing on the crowd with a fire-engine. At a late hour the disturbances became very serious. The Mayor read the Riot Act and the soldiers charged the mob at the point of the bayonet, dispersing them after violent and prolonged resistance. Permission to fire upon the people was asked for but refused by the Mayor."

² Cf. G. Howell, *Trade Unionism, New and Old*, pp. 150-1: "If one class of labour, or those for the time being employed in any industry, can claim the right to close a trade or occupation against all comers, why not all? . . . Even in times of prosperity, like those of the last two years, we hear complaints of men being out of work; ever so slight a slackening off will increase the number. . . . Supposing, then, that all the Unions closed their ranks—what is to become of the redundant population? And, as to the future, are those who come into the world to be strangled, or what? . . ."

³ Cf. *A Plea for Liberty*, pp. 217-18: "Dock labourers have been induced to threaten that they would not touch coal brought to Cardiff, for example, from collieries upon proscribed lines, and it has been announced that even if coal was placed on board vessels, the seamen and firemen would refuse to navigate the vessels. The same menaces, futile for the most part, but significant none the less, since they show the existence in outline of a vast conspiracy, have been held out in every one of the great disputes which have been mentioned."

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doing almost single-handed for the Sailors what the triumvirate of Burns, Mann, and Tillett were doing for the Dockers, but the use of threats that were vain as well as provocative was the reverse of wise. It at once goaded on and justified retaliatory action by the powerful Shipping Federation which went farther than that already taken by the Southampton Employers when they resolved, after defeating the local Dock Strike, to give no recognition to the Union and to take some trouble to form a register of amenable labour which, under the style of "free labour", would have preference in obtaining employment.¹

It would need a volume in itself to detail the history of the long fight between Wilson's Union and the Shipping Federation, a fight which at one stage produced a National Free Labour Association, menacing the whole structure of Unionism,² and permitted, also, some damaging incidental exposures of Wilson's book-keeping and expense accounts.³ Suffice it to say here that on February 14, 1891,

Mr. Wilson's threats during the Dock Strike, the nefarious manifesto issued during that strike . . . the threats of Mr. Wilson and of an Irish agitator, representing the coal-porters, during the gas-workers' affair; the abortive manifesto issued to the carmen of London by Mann and his allies during the strike at Hay's Wharf . . . all these are of such a nature that nobody, remembering them, can doubt the design . . . that whenever there is a dispute between an employer and his men, the whole force of the labour of the kingdom shall be brought to bear on that dispute . . . in favour of the men."

¹ Cf. *Illustrated London News*, September 20, 1890, p. 359: "Several ministers of religion—the Rev. W. Perrin, Vicar of St. Luke's, the Rev. Canon Scannell, Roman Catholic priest, and the Rev. J. Leach, Primitive Methodist—attempted to mediate between the strikers and the employers, but were not received by the latter. . . . The (Southampton) borough magistrates were occupied on Monday, September 15th, with the further hearing of several charges arising out of the riotous proceedings. . . . The charge which excited the greatest interest was that of Mr. Sprow, the leader of the dockers, who was charged, on remand, with intimidating several of the firemen, who had signed articles, from joining the Royal Mail steamship *La Plata*, and so prevented her going to sea. . . . The Employers of Labour Association met again at the Dock House. . . . The association adjourned their meeting; and on resuming a scheme for the registration of all free labour and employment for the port generally will be formulated and put into immediate operation. This scheme will embody a statement of the increased wages which are now paid on all sides and would arrange that these wages should continue for a certain period without being lessened or otherwise interfered with. What has mainly induced the employers in deciding not to recognise the union is the fact that the union makes it a *sine qua non* that none but unionists shall be employed, while the employers are firmly contending for the principle that employment shall be open to all."

² Cf. George Brooks, *Industry and Property*, ii, 335-47, who in 1894, expressed this hopeful anti-Socialist view: "For some years the Free Labour movement has been slowly gathering strength, and it now bids fair to assume such proportions as will enable it to grapple successfully with Trade Unionism on its own ground."

³ Cf. The National Free Labour Association pamphlet, *J. "Havelock" Wilson, M.P., Daylight on his Career, Exposure and Challenge, Astounding Revelations.*

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the Shipping Federation "presented the document" to all shipping employees, and they were required, before February 23rd, to pledge themselves, if they desired further employment, to accept specifically the conditions of the Merchant Shipping Act.¹ In other words, seamen and firemen were to obey the legal orders of the captain and his officers without attempting those arguments against non-unionists in the crew or "tainted goods" in the cargo which had already cost some prosecuted strikers terms of imprisonment.² And as the Shipping Federation claimed, by September 1893, to have registered 128,000 seamen, on these terms, and large numbers of dockers, too, had accepted similar conditions,³ it may be assumed that many of the extravagant expectations of the "New Unionism" of 1889 and 1890 had been effectively laid by 1893. On the other hand, any hopes that there had been of completely smashing the "New Unions" had been defeated also, for it was quite plain that, though their numbers had fallen far below the peak-levels of 1889 and 1890, a solid core of loyal members remained whose grievances could never be overlooked with safety.⁴ It may be doubted, indeed, whether any far-sighted employers, who assisted in launching a workmen's Free Labour Congress in October 1893 and sent subscriptions to the National Free Labour Association which resulted, harboured any greater hopes than that they were providing themselves with a new instrument for use against "extravagant" Union

Apparently the National Free Labour Association was confident that Wilson would not dare to bring a libel action or would lose it, if he did.

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1892, p. 367, under the dates February 14 and February 23, 1891.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, 1891, p. 363, under the date January 23, 1890: "Nine seamen at Swansea committed to prison for refusing to perform their duties."

³ Cf. George Brooks, *Industry and Property*, ii, 336-7: "No doubt the Free Labour movement received considerable stimulus from the action of the Shipping Federation, which had from the first made it a principle to engage Union or Non-Union men without distinction, which is the principle of Free Labour. The men are left to be Unionists or not just as they please, and they are required to bind themselves to work in harmony with Unionists or Non-Unionists alike. Upon this basis the Shipping Federation had registered no less than 128,000 seamen up to the end of September 1893, and a very large number of dock labourers had been engaged upon the same conditions. The result of this is that Southampton, Plymouth, Dublin, Cardiff, and to a great extent Hull and London, have been made free labour ports. A very large proportion of the men thus engaged by the Shipping Federation were known to be Unionists, but they had no sympathy with the tactics of the Trade Union leaders."

⁴ Cf. S. and B. Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 426, which reckoned the Gas-workers at 36,000 in 1894, and allowed the Dock, Wharf, and Riverside Labourers' Union (the Mann-Tillett-Burns Union) and the Sailors' and Firemen's Union "a membership fluctuating between 20,000 and 40,000".

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claims and "tyrannous" Union leaders.¹ Such an instrument they, in fact, obtained and used for the next twenty years.²

It was always a point with anti-Socialists that they needed to watch the political fields of Westminster and local government with the same attention that they gave to industry. Unceasingly, according to them, "Socialist" pressure was brought to bear on the elect of the "people" through the threat of hostile voting, and decisions were demanded which, in a bitterly competitive world, would spell the speedy ruin of British industry. Though, according to anti-Socialists, there had been sufficient "wisdom" even in "Labour" circles to make it necessary for the "Socialists" to manœuvre and fight hard before obtaining the T.U.C. resolution of September 1890 for making an eight-hour day the maximum permitted to British industry, once that resolution had been obtained there was always a danger that "faddists" and "extremists" at Westminster or in local government would lead a catastrophic surrender on the score of "humanity". As will be seen in another chapter, the "progressives" of the London County Council, with their allies on the London School Board, the London Vestries and the London Boards of Guardians, were the principal "humanitarians" whom the anti-Socialists feared, because, well plied with smart, but totally "unpractical" writing from the "Fabian Socialists", they seemed likeliest to give a lead in week-kneed "philanthropic" surrenders that would be widely followed. It was a fact, indeed, that the strategic eye of the Fabians had already marked out the London County Council as the likeliest agency for providing a national lead towards "Socialism".³ And, in

¹ Cf. G. Brooks, *Industry and Property*, ii, 338-9, quoting from the Free Labour Congress resolutions: "That in the opinion of this Congress, . . . the recent senseless and abortive strikes . . . have had a most disastrous effect upon the living standard of the wage-earning classes, and being also a standing menace to the trade and commerce of the Empire, more especially when viewed in relation to the present system of unrestricted foreign competition, and this Congress resolves to do everything in its power to put a stop to the aforesaid uncalled-for strikes. . . ." "That this Congress declares the time has arrived . . . for the prompt establishment of branches of the Free Labour Association in every industrial centre . . . as being an imperative necessity to safeguard the general body of labour from the tyranny and dictation of the new Socialistic Labour Unions. . . ." and "That this Congress, bearing in mind the system of intimidation and coercion practised by Union pickets during the recent disastrous strikes, whereby the common law of the land has been practically set aside, most earnestly calls for an amendment of the law relating to unlawful picketing. . . ."

² Cf. *The Apostle of Free Labour*, the life story of William Collison, founder and general secretary of the National Free Labour Association, told by himself (1913).

³ Cf. S. and B. Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 399-400, on how "the Collectivist victories on the London School Board and County Council, the

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Sidney Webb's *London Programme* of 1891, anti-Socialists found themselves presented with the dread spectre of a "Socialist" London with "municipalised" Gas, Water, Tram, Dock, and Market services, each presumably with a huge and arrogant band of "eight-hour" workmen, using political means to force up their pay and reduce their labours still further. Thereafter, almost for a generation, the London "progressives" were one of the bogeys of anti-Socialism, and the darkest stories were unendingly related of the "abuses" perpetrated by workmen, covered by the sheltering hand, say, of the Works Department of the County Council or the Contracts Department of the School Board.¹ And the horror of anti-Socialists was not, of course, diminished by the Fabians' proposal to finance their "extravagances" through a municipal death-duty, not to mention ground-rent rating.²

Apart from watching such "reckless" local authorities as the London County Council, on which, it was asserted, John Burns steady growth of municipal activity, and the increasing influence exercised by working men members of representative bodies, went far to persuade both Socialists and Trade Unionists that the only practical means of securing for the community the ownership and control of the means of production, lay in a wide extension of that national and municipal organisation of public services towards which Parliament and the Town Councils had already taken the first steps".

¹ Cf. *The Times*, November 18, 1901, in the opening article of a series entitled, "The Crisis in British Industry", and apparently designed to prepare the way for an American-style employer attack on Trade Union "restrictions": "Twenty years ago a bricklayer would lay his 1,000 bricks a day when on ordinary work. Thirty years ago the bricklayers employed on railway tunnel work laid even 1,200 a day. But the unwritten law now in force declares that a bricklayer engaged even on ordinary work must 'go easy' and not lay more than 400 in the day. The *maximum* of 400 bricks per day is the recognised limit for dwelling-houses, shops and business premises built for a private contractor. In the case of public buildings, and especially London County Council and London School Board work, the limit is considerably less. It is to be feared that the London County Council especially, with its direct employment of labour and its strong trade union sympathies, must be held responsible for the development of the 'go easy' practices in the building trades generally, the standard set by its own employees being regarded as one that should be followed. Thus a firm of contractors had a job on hand . . . and complaint was made to some of the bricklayers—who were engaged on some straightforward work on which they could easily have laid from 600 to 700 bricks a day—that they were not doing enough. The reply they gave was: 'The London County Council limit is 330 bricks a day. That is what they consider a fair day's work, and we are not going to do more for you or anyone else.' But the 330 limit was somewhat generous for public work, if it be true, as affirmed by one authority, that in the case of a certain Board School in London the average number of bricks laid was only 200 per day. . . . The wages have gone up substantially of late years. . . ."

² Cf. S. Webb, *The London Programme*, pp. 187-206, for these "confiscatory" proposals which, in the anti-Socialist view, were possibly exceeded in enormity by the claim for the London tramways at what "business" considered "break-up" values (according to Webb, "the actual value of the plant and stock employed"), so that the tramwaymen might be presented with the eight-hour day immediately and the tram-using workman with universal penny fares.

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was a potent influence from the beginning and where he was joined later by other worthies like "Alderman" Ben Tillett, Sidney Webb and Will Crooks,¹ anti-Socialists claimed to find reason for paying jealous attention even to the Westminster and Whitehall of the Salisbury Conservative days of 1886-92. It was not merely that such keen electoral rivalry as that which went on for years before the 1892 elections tended to promote the most unwise Conservative commitments on the Poor Law, it might be, or Old Age Pensions.² There was also constant and unremitting pressure from Government employees in dockyards and arsenals, which, after producing one dangerous concession after another, still left "dockyard constituencies" free to tempt Gladstonians to bid yet higher for their votes. And when the Gladstonian Government of 1892 was formed, resting, despite the comparative financial orthodoxy of its chief, on "extremist" votes, British and Irish, of the most "reckless" type, anti-Socialists prepared gloomily for "Socialist" concession-forcing on a more extended scale and at a faster pace.

"Progressive" government at Westminster certainly seemed accompanied by a recrudescence of trade-disputes though, truth to tell, they were mainly due to the same trade depression, lasting almost till 1895, which, in reviving "unemployed" demonstrations, gave anti-Socialists new reasons for lamentation. But it was inevitable that anti-Socialists should prefer to see "confiscatory Socialism" at work in such a string of events as the Lancashire cotton strikes of November 1892,³ the Bristol "Labour riots" of the ensuing month,⁴ the London "unemployed" troubles of January 1893,⁵ the Hull "dock outrages" of the following

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1890, p. 703, for Burns as one of the original members of the County Council. The other three appeared in 1892, in the company of such "extreme" Gladstonian Parliamentarians as Benn and Pickersgill. And Tillett promptly established an Aldermanic record by appearing in the dock, in April 1893, charged with inciting to riot at a Bristol dock strike.

² Cf. George Brooks, *Industry and Property*, ii, 511, quoting the one-time individualistic Radical, Auberon Herbert: "The truth is that no political party under present conditions, by whatever name you call it, can protect, or really intends to protect, either the property or the rights of the individual. . . . Both parties are in the same line of business; both deal in the same wares. They are both suitors for 'pretty Fanny's' hand, and they must both win their way into the affections of that practically minded young lady by the same presents, the same services."

³ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1893, p. 372: "Strike of Lancashire cotton workers against reduction of 5 p.c. in wages; about 45,000 out of work." The news is given under the date, November 3, 1892.

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 1894, under the date December 23, 1892.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 366, under January 31, 1893: "Opening of Parliament. Procession of 'Unemployed' to the House of Commons, stopped on reaching Westminster."

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April,¹ the Welsh pit-strike violence of August,² the Yorkshire and Lancashire strike-rioting of September and October,³ and the great Scottish pit-strikes of 1894.⁴ It was, of course, part of the anti-Socialist case that the presence in the Gladstonian ranks of an unprecedentedly large number of "friends of labour" was an element in the strikers' calculations since, as in the greatest of the pit-strikes of 1893, they might expect a political rescue if brought to the end of their strike-resources. Nor was it only in the matter of strikes that "progressives" awoke anti-Socialist mistrust. When, on February 26, 1894, the Gladstonian War Office adopted the eight-hour day at Woolwich Arsenal, there were those who considered its course even more pregnant of mischief to British industries, struggling against foreign competition, than the example already set by the London County Council. And when Mundella at the Board of Trade had finished with his "Labour Department", he left an institution more exasperating to anti-Socialists than any other in Government service.⁵ Even in 1901 many firms, convinced of its overwhelming bias towards

¹ *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1893, p. 367, under date February 20, 1893: "Dock troubles at Hull began, followed by the strike and outrages of April." In April the worst outrages reported were on April 5th ("Riotous scenes at Hull: 250 free labour men assailed by strikers in the docks") and on April 23rd ("Great fire in timber-yards at Hull, attributed to strikers: also rioting").

² *Ibid.*, p. 370, under date August 16th: "Rioting of colliers on strike at Ebbw Vale; troops employed to keep order"; and under date August 23rd: "South Wales miners largely return to work; but intimidation and violence by strikers continued".

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 370-1, under date September 5th: "Rioting among miners near Barnsley, &c.; the Riot Act read"; under date September 7th: "The military fire on a mob of colliers at Acton Hall Collieries near Featherstone, South Yorkshire; two men mortally wounded"; and under October 17th: "Serious colliery riot at St. Helens; another near Wigan on following day".

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 1895, p. 369, under June 26th, 1894: "Strike of 65,000 Scottish coal-miners." This was again a long and determined strike as is indicated by this entry under a date as late as September 18th: "Desperate encounter between the police and miners on strike at Motherwell, Scotland."

⁵ Cf. G. Brooks, *Industry and Property*, ii, 406-7 n., who had already worked himself up to this in 1894: "One matter which ought to be inquired into is the officering of the Labour Department by Trade Unionists. There is reason to believe that the men who work this department are not merely avowed adherents of Trade Unionism, but fanatical, and almost rabid, advocates of that system. . . . Trade Unionists are, as we have shown, an insignificant minority of the working men of this country, and it is an outrage that a Government Department should be manipulated, by the aid of public funds, almost exclusively in their interests. . . . The Free Labour Association and those legislators who are in sympathy with its principles, should forthwith turn their attention to the cleansing of this Augean stable. The Labour Department should be completely overhauled, and those of its officials who are working for Trade Unions instead of the general community—or, what is the same thing, who regard the interests of these Unions and the public as identical—should be at once dismissed."

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trade-unionism, were declining all its circular requests for statistical aid.¹

Enough has been said to prove that there were mighty and watchful dragons in the path of "Socialism", reinforced though that had come to be by two such powerful agencies of propaganda as the Independent Labour Party and the *Clarion* weekly newspaper. The Independent Labour Party, successfully launched by Keir Hardie early in 1893, undoubtedly succeeded in capturing, in the course of time, much of the most energetic Radicalism of the masses, and its rise not only contributed to the collapse, after 1895, of the old-fashioned Labour Electoral Association,² but ended, too, the last real prospect of Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation. But if Keir Hardie, avoiding Hyndman's most fatal mistake, sought rather to annex than to antagonise chapel sentiment,³ and if Blatchford's *Clarion*, when republishing as *Merry England* a famous series of articles, brought to bear on hundreds of thousands the most effective writing for the "people" since Cobbett's,⁴ it is

¹ Cf. *The Times*, January 16, 1902: "Against the Labour Department of the Board of Trade the prejudice was found to be especially keen. . . . There are employers who systematically return with the following endorsement the 'forms' sent to them by that department—'Decline to report. Have no confidence in the Labour Department of the Board of Trade as at present constituted'. . . . Has not the time arrived for the Labour Department to be transformed from a body whose chief function seems to be to provide posts for trade union officials, past or present. . . ? With such reconstruction, too, there should be a change of name—the name of 'Labour Department' dropped altogether, and that of 'Industrial Intelligence Department' adopted instead."

² Cf. G. D. H. Cole, *British Working Class Politics, 1832-1914*, p. 113 et seq. "The L.E.A. (Labour Electoral Association) existed as a central body, with T. R. Threlfall as Secretary, until 1895, when it held its last Congress. But at any rate by 1893 it had ceased to be of any importance. It petered out gradually after the General Election of 1892; for, though at its final Congress it was still able to muster 89 delegates, it is doubtful whether by that time they represented much more than themselves. . . ."

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 134-5: "In Great Britain the 'nineties were above all else the age of an ethical Socialism full of warm feelings of sympathy for the poor, and somewhat scornful of doctrines that could not be cast into the form of moral imperatives. . . . Undoubtedly, this appeal was at the time the most likely to bring over large sections of the British workers from their traditional allegiance to Gladstonian Liberalism. . . . They were in many cases still closely attached to one or another Nonconformist congregation; and even when they became sceptical of the dogmas of the Churches they were apt to feel cold and un comforted unless they could find some spiritual substitute. This mood accounts for the rapid spread of John Trevor's Labour Church movement, which became organised in 1893 as the Union of Labour Churches. . . ."

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 130-4. Here is one extract on Blatchford's writing in the *Clarion* after 1891: "His sympathy with suffering was intense. . . . He had a deep belief in the fundamental niceness of the great majority of ordinary men and women. . . . Socialism was, for him, a means of turning the 'Dismal England' which he saw around him into a 'Merry England' which could be easily realised if only other people could be made to see that Socialism was the

none the less true that the 1895 General Election seemed superficially to have brought disaster. Not a single I.L.P. or S.D.F. candidate was returned from 28 contests, and even Keir Hardie lost his seat by a wide margin. Both Hyndmanic Socialism and the "Independent Labour", that sought to hold itself apart from the Liberal Front Bench's fights—sham or otherwise—with "privilege" and the House of Lords, were compelled to wait, like the Liberal Front Bench itself, for the long-delayed reaction against the "strongest Government of modern times" just enthroned by the Election. Meanwhile even "Independent Labour" seemed sometimes to be at a dangerously low ebb, despite scattered "triumphs" at School Board and Town Council elections,¹ and the Fabians were, before the turn of the tide, backsliding as far as criticism of the Boers and praise of the 1902 Education Bill.²

In the nature of things, Trade Union strength was not exposed to the same dangers from "political reaction" as were the Socialist propaganda societies. Indeed, there were Miners' Federation proceedings of January 1899 sufficiently detached from the party struggle proper to hear thanks given to Mr. Chamberlain for the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1897.³ And as the "political reaction" came at a time when "trade" had just taken a sharp turn for the better, Trade Union membership and income both showed substantial progress in 1896 and 1897 despite "reaction's" alleged triumph in 1895.⁴ But Conservative victories in politics had an inevitable effect on the industrial and judicial fields, even if British conditions never permitted the imposition upon the Trade Unions, "for the sake of industrial peace", of the fundamental

only decent, kindly, human solution of the problem of unnecessary suffering. He had, far beyond any other English writer, the power of making decent, ordinary people feel this as he felt it. . . . *Merrie England* was published originally at one shilling, and of this edition 20,000 copies were sold. . . . Pete Curran suggested reissuing the book at one penny. . . . In less than a year the sale rose to three-quarters of a million. . . ."

¹ Cf. *Annual Report*, 1900, which Cole admits to contain definite proof of only 4,000 paying members, despite 63 Town Councillors, 4 County Councillors, 36 Urban and 3 Rural District Councillors, 16 Parish Councillors, 8 Citizens' Auditors, 51 members of Boards of Guardians and 65 members of School Boards of whom boast is made.

² Cf. E. R. Pease, *History of the Fabian Society*, pp. 128-48, for some comment.

³ Cf. *The Times*, January 12, 1899, for loud praises of the Act by representatives of Yorkshire and Scottish miners.

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, January 14, 1899, using the Board of Trade's Report for 1897. According to this the membership of the one hundred principal Unions had fallen from 924,584 in 1894, to 914,706 in 1895, but had then risen to 961,026 in 1896 and 1,059,609 in 1897. The corresponding income figures had been, for 1894, £1,629,550, for 1895, £1,557,667, for 1896, £1,673,571, and for 1897, £1,981,971.

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restrictions of function and constitution some had hoped for.¹ It seems, for example, that the engineering employers' thorough defeat of their men's determined but over-ambitious strike of 1897 led some of them to urge the industry's adoption towards the Unions of the masterful attitude of American employers, "whose freedom to organise their own works in their own way" was alleged to give them tremendous advantages in the competition for international orders. Indeed, when "bad trade" came again in 1901 and a *Times* Industrial Correspondent wrote a series of articles blaming the factory and workshop restrictions imposed by the Unions, he found the engineering position better than most because of the resolute way in which the masters had been able to reorganise their plants after their victory of 1897.²

Of course, in the eyes of *The Times*, the position even in engineering was a long way short of the American ideal since there was still trouble in getting trade-unionists to work with non-unionists, while the introduction of new machinery was liable to provoke a sullen resolution amongst the men that net output should never be increased if that would make the dismissal of "redundant" hands more likely.³ Yet, according to *The Times*, the engineering employers had effected a vast change for the better, and employers in other harassed and decaying trades were so impressed by the tremendous advances made possible by America's freedom from the worst union restrictions that they were meditating even more drastic

¹ Cf. G. Brooks, *Industry and Property*, ii, 397-407, and Auberon Herbert in *A Plea for Liberty*, pp. 379-414. Brooks pressed for the re-allotment of voting power within the Unions on the basis of the total of contributions paid in, hoping thus to give the older men far greater voting power than the younger members "who are less burdened by responsibility, and who . . . are in favour of extreme courses". Brooks also wanted legal personality imposed upon the Trade Unions so that they could be sued for the misconduct of their agents, and thus went farther than the tentative suggestions made by some of the members of the Labour Commission which reported in 1894 and provoked alarm in the T.U.C.

² Cf. *The Times*, November 18, 1901, for the opening of a long series of jeremiads entitled, "The Crisis in British Industry". The gloomiest picture was drawn of the effect of the Unions' policy on some of the most important trades in the country, including building, shipbuilding, the Sheffield industries, the Birmingham brass trades, the glass and bottle trades, and the boot and shoe industry.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, November 21, 1901: "Thus it has been proved necessary, for example, in engineering shops where non-unionists are engaged on certain portions of the work to locate them in parts of the premises where they are practically shut off. . . . This is especially the case where new methods have been introduced, requiring new tools or the alteration of existing ones. The old hands belonging to the 'skilled' class took so unkindly to these new methods that complete failure was experienced until unskilled men were brought in from the street, put where the old hands could not get to them and taught what to do."

action. In the Sheffield cutlery trades *The Times* reported "an increasing disposition among the employers not to remain at the mercy of the trade unions. . . . To-day every fresh trouble that arises, especially in the cutlery trades, is regarded as a further incentive to the invention or the adoption of machines which can be worked by more or less unskilled labour."¹ In the wine-bottle trade, again, practically transferred to Germany, it was claimed, by the impositions of the trade unions, *The Times* reported a successful revival of the industry after an enterprising set of employers had brought in continental operatives and had commenced working free of trade-union trammels.² What these trammels could be *The Times* illustrated from rules like those of the Boilermakers who, favoured by a succession of shipbuilding "booms", were able to impose conditions on the industry which, according to *The Times*, gave a dangerous premium to American yards.

It is, perhaps, worth giving some quotations from the Boilermakers' new rules of 1901 to show what conditions a prosperous craft aimed to establish when it was strong enough. Of the admission of new-comers to the trade, the Rule Book decreed:³

No one shall be acknowledged by this Society as having any claim on the trade who does not commence working at the same at the age of sixteen years, and continues at it for the space of five years. . . .

The number of apprentices must not exceed one to every five journeymen. . . . This is to apply in slack times as well as busy times. . . .

Any member of the society . . . instructing anyone not connected with the society (except legal apprentices) by allowing him to practise

¹ *The Times*, December 26, 1901.

² *Ibid.*, December 14, 1901: "At one time there were a dozen places in the North of England where black glass bottles were made, some of them very important concerns indeed. The employees at these different works were among the first in the country to form a trade union, and it became the distinct policy of this union to adhere, with as little change as possible, to the original method of making black bottles. . . . It was extremely difficult to teach the English trade to apprentices and it was difficult also to find men with constitutions sufficiently strong. . . . But the men's union would sanction none but the old style of working . . . one after another of the original firms retired from the business . . . until at last only three of the dozen remained . . . and the Germans practically captured the market. . . ." This was a prelude to an ecstatic description of how 150 foreigners had been brought over, housed, with their families, in seventy cottages about North Woolwich, and set to work in the shifts and conditions, banned by the union though most suitable to the trade. Working by the piece, and in six eight-hour shifts, during the week instead of five of ten hours, the immigrants were reported by the enthusiastic *Times* to be making £2 to £3 a week.

³ *Ibid.*, November 21, 1901.

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with his tools . . . shall on proof thereof be fined for the first offence 10s.; for the second £1; and the third to be expelled the Society.

And here are the restrictions imposed by the Boilermakers' Society on machine-working and employment by the piece:

All riveting machines used in shipbuilding where piecework is done must be worked by a full set of riveters, who must be members of our society.

All riveting machines used in boiler shops or bridge yards must be worked by our members at riveters' rates.

Caulking, cutting and other machines, whether hydraulic, electric or pneumatic to be worked by our members at recognised rates.

It is not in the interest of this society that piecework should be done, but when members are compelled to do it . . . Any member taking work below the usual price shall be fined £1 for the first offence, £5 for the second and be suspended from all benefits for twelve months if detected the third time. Any member taking piecework must consult the other members of that branch in the shop or yard. . . . Any member working piecework, or causing it to be introduced . . . where it is not already in existence, without first laying the matter before his branch . . . shall be fined £5 for the first offence, and expelled for the second. . . .

Newspaper jeremiads and tentative employer plans for check-mating the unions proved less immediately threatening than the workings of the law. In 1898 a potentially dangerous restriction had been put upon strikes by the judicial decision that pickets could not be posted solely for purposes of "peaceful persuasion", but that, on the contrary, their only justifiable purpose was to obtain or communicate information.¹ This was merely one of several Court findings that had been giving the trades anxiety of late but none possessed such catastrophic possibilities as the unanimous findings of the Law Lords in their Taff Vale Judgement of 1901. For thirty years it had been almost universally assumed, by the Trade Unions and their opponents alike, that the Trade Union Act of 1871 freed unions from the hostile legal presumptions of the past without conferring upon them the unwanted corporative status which would have exposed their funds to new threats.

¹ Cf. *The Times*, May 15, 1902, for the Gladstonian ex-Law Officer, Sir Robert Reid: "But in the year 1898 it was decided that picketing for the purpose of peaceful persuasion was contrary to the law. It was an interference with the ordinary comfort of human existence . . . said one of the judges. . . . It was decided in that case that the men were entitled to attend near the works . . . only for the purpose of obtaining or communicating information. . . . The effect of the change was that pickets might not even, to use the phrase of the employers, enter into any argument with persons approaching or leaving the works. That was one of the first deadly blows given to the effectiveness of strikes by recent decisions. . . ."

Opponents of the unions, indeed, had been so firmly persuaded of this that they had long called loudly for the forcible imposition of corporation status upon the unions so that their funds might be attachable in the event of loss being inflicted by breaches of their engagements.¹ And it is said that when the manager of the Taff Valley Railway determined to sue the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants for loss suffered by his company as the result of a "wrongful strike" which the Society had ultimately supported, his own lawyers strongly advised him to refrain. The House of Lords, however, gave a verdict that did much more than mulct the Union of £23,000 in damages and a larger sum in costs. All Unions, it appeared, would in future be liable to similar actions brought either directly or against their officers and trustees, and, in addition, injunctions would be obtainable restraining, under the sanction of imprisonment for contempt of court, Union officers, agents or members from conduct which the Courts considered, until further examination, *prima facie* "wrongful". There seemed no safety in future for Union funds or Union action for, undoubtedly, language had been employed in the Courts under which the very Unions, strong enough to establish the "closed shop" and their members' monopoly of specified craft-processes, lay widest open to legal attack.²

It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to say more to explain why ever heartier support came from Trade Union funds and officials for the new Labour Representation Committee which had, under the direct auspices of the Trades Union Congress, been set up in 1900 to replace the defunct Labour Electoral Association.³ It may

¹ Cf. G. Brooks, *Property and Industry*, ii, 400-6, who in 1894 found the "Observations" just appended to the Report of the Royal Commission on Labour much too mild because corporation status had "been put forward in so cautious and tentative a manner". Employers' Associations would, of course, have been treated similarly.

² Cf. G. D. H. Cole, *British Working Class Politics, 1832-1914*, pp. 167-9, for a short treatment of the cumulative effect of *Allen v. Flood*, *Quinn v. Leatham* and *The Taff Vale Judgement*. It is certainly noteworthy that in a debate of May 14, 1902, three such responsible Opposition lawyers as Reid, Haldane and Asquith strongly questioned the wisdom of the Courts, the two future Lord Chancellors virtually condemning the bias of recent decisions between masters and men.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 169: "The imperative need to secure a reversal of the Taff Vale Judgement and of recent court decisions brought the Trade Unions into politics much more rapidly than any amount of persuasion by the Socialists could have done. . . . In the first year the effective Trade Union membership was only 353,000. This rose to 455,000 in 1901, to 847,000 in 1902, and to 956,000 in 1903; and over the same period the number of affiliated Trades Councils rose from 7 to 76. . . ."

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be assumed that the most influential Union officials within the new organisation were of the "practical" kind that recognised that the doctrinaire Socialism of the Social Democratic Federation or even of the Independent Labour Party made no real appeal yet to the mass of their members who were best prepared, perhaps, for supporting a Union official on a Radical programme (with a "Labour" bias) when he fought the seat with the blessing of the local Liberal Association. It was on this basis that the Miners, who felt no need to come into the new movement, had already secured a measure of Parliamentary representation which satisfied them for the time being, and, certainly, the Liberal Central Office was to do its best before the next election to persuade local Liberal Associations to allow a further number of "Labour" men "straight fights against the Tory". The prestige of Liberal lawyers, moreover, made up a considerable portion of the strength deployed against the Taff Vale Judgement while their help had to be sought, and was freely given, in the work of exploring what new legal safeguards could be found for Union funds until legislation was obtainable.

It is worth noting, finally, that there seemed to be impressive proof of enlightened social feeling in much of what the younger Liberals were busy with—the remarkable collection of essays, for example, known as *The Heart of the Empire*; such fine writing as Charles Masterman gave to the Liberal press; and, ultimately, Chiozza Money's very effective *Riches and Poverty*. When all these things—not to mention safe seats—attracted even the zealots of the Independent Labour Party to undertaking their profitable, if tacit, bargaining of 1906 with the Liberals, the attractions of such bargaining for the "moderate" men were, of course, greater.

Perhaps this chapter could not be ended better than by quoting the election manifestos of the Miners' Federation and the Trades Union Congress. The Miners' Federation had been so successful with its demarcation arrangements that all the thirteen candidates for whom it assumed direct responsibility were returned to Parliament, twelve of them without Liberal opposition.¹ And here is the nature of the Federation's appeal:²

The Federation has spent much money and effort, by lobbying members and in other ways, for the promotion of the various Labour

¹ Actually two further miners' members from the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation were elected under the auspices of the Labour Representation Committee. They, too, were spared Liberal opposition.

² *The Reformers' Year Book*, 1907, p. 54.

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questions in which we are interested, such as an Eight Hours Bill, an amended Mines Bill, old-age pensions, an amended Workmen's Compensation Act, the Trades Disputes Bill, and many other measures of vital importance to working men. We have always felt, however, that the amount of success has not attended our efforts which we could have desired, and this we believe to be due mainly to the want of a larger number of direct Labour representatives in Parliament. We now have our opportunity to prove whether we are in earnest . . . and so . . . candidates accepted by various constituencies and endorsed by this Federation will seek your suffrages. Whilst the candidates will run under the auspices of the Miners' Federation, they will be found to be in full accord with the aspirations and needs of the labouring classes generally, and will co-operate heartily with other Labour representatives.

The Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress, which had a good deal to do with the generalship that secured 30 M.P.s from the 51 candidatures under the Labour Representation Committee's auspices, also took a thoroughly "practical" line. Above all it appealed to working-class voters to support only those candidates pledged to:¹

The principles embodied in the Trades Disputes Bill (to undo the effects of the Taff Vale and other judgements);

Amendment of the Compensation Acts;

Give compensation to all workers from date of accident;

Amendment of the Truck Act;

Abolition of enforced Chinese labour in South Africa;

Establishment of a State Pension Fund at 60 years of age;

Extension of the Housing Acts;

Returning officers' fees to be a charge upon the national Exchequer;

Adult Suffrage; and

Establishment of an eight-hour working day.

Obviously the Trade Union office-holders were convinced that the majority of their members' votes would be attracted by a moderate and reformist programme. And the same conviction is, perhaps, attributable to the I.L.P. and S.D.F. Executives since they drafted manifestos from which the word "Socialism" seems to have been deliberately excluded.²

¹ *The Reformers' Year Book*, 1907, p. 54.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 53, for the S.D.F. substituting for the once normal "until the advent of Socialism" the more attractive "until the people owned the means of making and distributing all useful and beautiful things".

CHAPTER XXIV

RADICALS AND INDIA

“Since 1885 the action of the House of Commons has seriously affected the position of the Government of India in the eyes of the natives, by giving evidence of the existence of divided authority. The House of Commons is ignorant, but supreme. . . . Recent interferences of the House of Commons with the Government of India are ominous for the future. The Opium Commission, appointed rather with a view to political exigencies at home, than from any warrantable necessity, has been the most conspicuous example of ignorant or reckless philanthropists jerking the reins from the driver’s hands. The question of the holding of examinations at Calcutta is another case in point. In the case of the moral condition of military cantonments, the House of Commons ignored plain facts which, however repulsive or deplorable, no statesman dealing with celibate troops can omit from his calculations. . . . When Members of Parliament visit India, and exalt the garrulous Babu to a sense of rights he never possessed, which he has not earned, to wrongs he has not suffered, the amiable Parliamentarians concerned are setting in motion a very complex machinery. . . .

“Most Members of the House of Commons, steeped in a democratic environment, find it difficult to project themselves into the conditions of Indian life. With them a congress is too often a fetish. . . . a congress of educated natives meeting at Amritsar or Allahabad is assumed to speak for India as when Mr. Burns expresses the views of the Socialists of South London. . . . The views of the Indian Government are jeered at, denied, flouted. Official statements are considered to be sufficiently answered when they are branded as official. The conception that Indian officials tell the truth on any subject, when Mr. Bonnerjee, Mr. Lalmohun Ghose, Mr. Caine and Mr. Naoroji take the opposite view scarcely exists. They are officials, therefore they are liars. When traduced, custom imposes on them silence. But they resent, and rightly resent, the defamation to which the Indian Civil Service is now constantly subjected. Lord Ripon opened the door to the loss of India that must inevitably occur unless the democracy wakes up to an Imperial sense of their magnificent ignorance: to the worth and moral excellence of their gallant servants in their Eastern Empire, and to the petty fanaticism of the

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meddlesome prigs who alone seem to have gained the ear of Demos in matters relating to India. . . ."

ARNOLD WHITE releases a broadside against "crocheteers" in *English Democracy, Its Promises and Perils* (1894).

"It is morally certain that if we had spent as much on irrigation as on railways in the past fifty years a great part of India would now be beyond the reach of famine. We have spent some 300 millions on railways and only some 30 millions on irrigation. We are spending scarcely one million a year on irrigation and eight to ten millions on railways. Has not the time come to make irrigation our principal task? . . . Unhappily there is no section of the British public sufficiently interested to press the Government on the subject; but there is a powerful interest always pressing them on the subject of railways. The great iron trade and the engineering profession bring pressure, which it is hard to resist, on every Indian Secretary, and practically his whole borrowing power is used up in this direction."

Samuel Smith, M.P., one of the "crocheteers", on Indian Famine, *Hansard*, April 3, 1900.

DURING Salisbury's second Government of 1886-92, "progressive opinion" on India was very much occupied with the problem of making the Indian Legislative Councils more "representative" of the Indian peoples. And though Lord Salisbury, an ex-India Secretary himself, brought much pungent High Tory criticism to bear on those who forgot that India's fighting races still counted for more in that country than Bengali "Congress wallahs", he was compelled nevertheless to make considerable concessions to the democratic *Zeitgeist*. He was, after all, only a minority Conservative Premier, dependent on the support of Liberal-Unionists, some of whom were disturbingly apt to out-Gladstone the Gladstonians whenever Ireland was not in question. An India Councils Act, therefore, finally appeared on the Statute Book in 1892, just before the Salisbury Government appealed to the "country" and was defeated. It went, of course, no long way towards the goal already set by the Indian National Congress when demanding democratic election for at least half the Governor-General's Legislative Council and half the provincial Legislative Councils for Madras, Bombay, Bengal, and the North-West Provinces. Neither Gladstonian suggestions in the Lords nor Radical amendments in the Commons had succeeded in pushing Salisbury farther than accepting the principle that the Legislative Councils should be enlarged and their members allowed to ask "Parliamentary questions" and discuss the Budget.¹

Salisbury's High Toryism might have yielded even less but for the attitude taken by his Viceroy. Dufferin, inherited from Gladstone, and Lansdowne, chosen diplomatically among the Liberal-Unionists, had both pressed for some further assumption of constitutional appearances in India and had been aided by the undeniable difficulties of their time. The "Congress Movement", born of Indians' resentment of the hostility shown by Europeans to the Ripon reforms, was steadily growing in power; the Revenue

¹ Cf. Lady Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Salisbury*, iv, 193-202. Also Salisbury's speech in the Lords on February 15, 1892, for such *Hansard* passages as this: "We must be careful lest, by the application of occidental machinery, we bring into power not the strong, natural, vigorous, effective elements of Indian society, but the more artificial and weakly elements which we ourselves have made and brought into prominence. It would be a great evil if, in any system of government which we gradually develop, the really strong portions of Indian society did not obtain that share in the government to which their natural position among their own people traditionally entitle them."

situation, in view of the continuous fall in the exchange-value of the silver rupee, was one long nightmare; and partial crop-failures in 1889, 1891 and 1892 increased the strain on Government finances, already heavily burdened by the task of finding sufficient depreciated rupees to meet huge "Home Charges" at London in gold.¹ Nor should it be forgotten that the Burmese annexation policy of the first Salisbury Government had produced heavy military "extraordinaries" since 1885, and had added Tibetan, Chinese, Siam and French Indo-China frontiers to India's already expensive Defence problems. If, therefore, some Indian criticism could be disarmed and some Indian support secured by a relatively "harmless" re-arrangement of the Legislative Councils, there was the strongest of cases for it even on the grounds of Conservative expediency. It says much for Salisbury's intense dislike of making a beginning with the "elective" principle that, even while accepting the India Councils Act of 1892, he refused to admit into the measure any specific elective commitments in regard to the handfuls of new non-official members whose addition to the Councils was under consideration. Lord Cross, India Secretary, might privately sympathise with Viceregal notions of accepting the "elective" instead of the nomination principle for a few "select" constituencies specially designed to be safe. Curzon, Cross's Under-Secretary, might have, in the Commons, even greater need of pointing to a "liberal" precedent, "boldly set by the Government", when meeting full-blooded "elective principle" amendments moved by the Radicals.² All Salisbury would stand committed to was the issue, after the Act, of new Viceregal Regulations under which a small new quota of non-official members would be admitted to the Legislative Councils.

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1892, pp. 455-8, for the catastrophic fall of the rupee to below 1s. 4d. in 1899 (after having been over 2s. 2d. in 1860-1, in the hey-day of silver values). The bulk of "Home Charges", totalling nearly sixteen millions sterling in 1890-1, and absorbing well over a quarter of the Revenue, went to meet Debt and Railway Interest owed in London in pounds. But there were formidable strains on the Exchange in addition to those involved by the Interest remittances to London. Any study of Pension, Furlough and India Office expenditure would make this clear.

² Cf. Lady Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Salisbury*, iv, 200-1: "By that time (the spring of 1892) the India Office appears to have succumbed to the pressure from Calcutta—Lord Cross, vaguely, and Mr. Curzon, the Under-Secretary, more definitely, intimating in debate their personal approval of the elective solution. But the latter—acting evidently under orders—steadily resisted in the House of Commons a series of Radical amendments to insert words enjoining or recommending it, and the brief remarks with which Lord Salisbury took leave of the Bill in the House of Lords showed his attitude to be unchanged."

As matters turned out after the General Election of 1892, it was not Salisbury's India Office but Gladstone's which had the oversight of the Viceregal Regulations drafted in consequence of the new India Councils Act. And if Lord Kimberley, the India Secretary of 1892-4, could hardly be described as influenced by "extreme" Radical "friends of India" in the House of Commons,¹ there were those who would hardly have spoken with the same confidence of G. W. E. Russell, Kimberley's representative in the Lower House and one of Gladstone's younger intimates. Russell was later to justify every fear of the partisans of Empire when he became the "irresponsible" leader of the "Liberal Forwards" who fought so hard against the Imperialism of 1895-1902. And even while still sobered by the heavy bureaucratic traditionalism of the India Office, he seems to have been willing to forward very considerable concessions to his Radical friends. Exactly what concessions to long-standing Radical demands were made in the House of Commons during 1893 must be dealt with later. First, it is necessary to show how the Viceregal Regulations on the new constitution of the India Councils became something different under Gladstone from what Salisbury would have tried to make them. It may be said, in effect, that the "thin end of the wedge" of the elective principle was, with reservations, introduced into the Indian Legislatures.

Of course, the Congress demand for the allotment of a full half of the seats on the Legislative Councils to elected representatives was not conceded. There were, nominally, to be no elected representatives as such, but only members recommended for official nomination by select constituencies as, for example, in Bengal where seven members of the twenty sitting in the Legislative Council were to be recommended as follows: one by the

¹ Cf. W. S. Caine, *Address to the Electors of East Bradford*, for one of the successful at the 1892 Election, who had ventured to treat of India Reform in his Election Address. "The most important question affecting India", he had written, "which comes before Parliament is the Bill which has been twice introduced by the late Charles Bradlaugh, dealing with the passionate desire of the educated natives of India to obtain some share in the government of their own country. . . . Their demands are limited to a *consultative voice* on the councils of the various States and of the Imperial Government, by the election of a limited number of representatives, leaving the majority and therefore the absolute control in the hands of the Viceroy, the provincial governors and their advisers. I have taken a leading part in the agitation for this much-needed reform, both in India and at home, and there is nothing in these demands of the Indian people that the Liberal party of this country are not bound by every principle they possess to grant with an open hand."

Calcutta Municipality, two by the other Bengal Municipalities, two by Bengal's District Boards, one by Calcutta University and one by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce. Very similar schemes were adopted for Bombay, Madras, and the North-West Provinces while the Governor-General's Supreme Council was also to see the entry of a quasi-elective element in a class of five new members—four recommended by the "unofficial" members of the four Provincial Councils and one by the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce. The new "recommended" and the old "nominated" types of "unofficial member" were, of course, destined to become much more vocal in the Legislative Councils in consequence of the new privileges conferred upon them in the India Councils Act. Instead of being confined, as "unofficials" had sometimes been, to largely silent voting on the official legislative drafts laid before them,¹ they were now entitled to undertake detailed discussions of the Budget and to put "Parliamentary questions" on administrative matters to the Executive. "Advanced men" obviously had some right to congratulate themselves on a "step forward in the path of progress" though critics of Gladstonianism pessimistically shook their heads over the doctrinaire folly of those Radicals who, ignoring the "Russian menace" and the Currency crisis, persisted in agitating for further measures and yet more "democracy".

Critics of Gladstone's "advanced men" grew almost abusive when discussing their Indian record for 1893.² At a time when the Calcutta Executive was preparing to wrestle with such primary administrative problems as the Abolition of the separate Presidential Army Systems of Bombay and Madras, at a time, too, when the Executive was steeling itself, after long inquiries in India

¹ Cf. Lady Gwendolen Cecil's *Life of Salisbury*, iv, 193, for an admission: "No one questioned the need of such a measure. The councils were still constituted as they had been under the Act of 1861, passed at the time that the Crown took over the direct government of India after the Mutiny. They were formed by an addition to the official Executive Councils of small numbers of nominated members, chosen for their representative quality among Indians and non-official Europeans. The 1861 Act had restricted them so exclusively to their legislative functions that their members were not allowed to discuss the Budget except such items of it as might require a change in the law, or even ask for information. . . ."

² Cf. Arnold White's *English Democracy, Its Promises and Perils*, pp. 128-49, for a long chapter which ends as bloodthirstily as this: "If two or three travelling philanthropists were tied over an ant-heap, blown from a gun, or hanged to a peepul tree, the cause of temperance or the textile trades might suffer, but it would be a bold man who would assert that the welfare of one-fifth of the human race would not be directly enhanced by the perpetration of this crime—especially if the victims were M.P.s."

and England, to adopt the Gold Standard at a valuation of 1s. 4d. to the rupee, Gladstone's "advanced men", it was claimed, confined their attention, as far as India was concerned, to reckless riding of their own hobby-horses and those of their Indian protégés, the "Congress wallahs". The Indian Government had certainly had no easy task in overcoming the allied Anglo-Indian and native exporting interests in cotton, wheat and tea who, selling to gold-standard countries, had gained from the depreciated rupee. Those interests had sometimes gone as far as encouraging native opposition to the Gold Standard by asserting that it would damage Indian trade in the interests of British officials primarily concerned for what their rupees would bring them in Britain on furlough or retirement.¹ Yet for the burdened Executive the "advanced" had no encouragement but only a set of further "outrageous" new demands.

Though the "advanced" got a good deal of the blame for the 1893 outcry raised by W. T. Stead on the subject of "Regulated Vice" for the troops in India, this was, perhaps, hardly fair.² Feminist and religious agitation combined had been largely responsible for the long war against "Contagious Diseases" legislation which, according to the religious, encouraged soldiers to fornication by offering apparent security and, according to the feminists, degraded native womanhood to the animal level, without really providing any security at all. The "advanced" had, of course, had much sympathy for the thesis that England's task was to raise the status of native womanhood but it is difficult to see that "democracy", as such, had the special "credit" for securing the Parliamentary resolution of 1889 in virtue of which orders were given in India for the same abandonment of the "official Regulation of Vice" as had been forced years before in England. But military officers undoubtedly blamed the "advanced" for attempting to raise a dangerous storm in 1893 when it was discovered that sections of the Indian Army were virtually disregarding orders in the interests, as they claimed, of the soldiers' health

¹ Cf. *Nineteenth Century*, March 1893, for Ameer Ali's article entitled, "The Rupee and the Ruin of India", pp. 515-24. He thought it essential to contradict the impression that "seemed to prevail in certain quarters that the fall of the gold value of silver affects only the European officials in India, and that an attempt to restore the rupee to anything like its old value would be prejudicial to the people of the country. . . . It is said that the agricultural classes have gained by the depreciation . . . and that the export trade . . . derives its chief impetus from the falling exchange. . . ."

² Cf. *Review of Reviews* (Stead's monthly), April, May and June 1893.

and the Army's efficiency. W. T. Stead and the *Review of Reviews* actually went as far as threatening Lansdowne, the Viceroy, and Lord Roberts, the Commander-in-Chief, with the condign wrath of Parliament if it was found that they had connived at this military disobedience and, in point of fact, a Departmental Inquiry, under G. W. E. Russell, had to be offered to the malcontents.¹ On the whole it may be assumed from the unending complaint of Army officers and *The Times of India* that the Departmental Inquiry made almost impossible the military's continuance of what Stead called "the shameful system of double-shuffle and of make-believe by which the will of the Imperial Parliament and the orders of the Crown have been thwarted".²

It is time to turn to the two most characteristic Indian efforts of the Gladstonian majority during the Session of 1893. On June 2nd they carried, by 84 votes against 76, a resolution which recommended that the Indian Civil Service Examinations should in future be held simultaneously in India and England.³ Thus was brought to a moment of apparent triumph a Radical crusade which may be held to have opened when, on May 5, 1868, Fawcett had moved for simultaneous examination in London, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.⁴ There was, of course, the strongest of "democratic" cases for giving more Indians the chance of competing for the great prizes of the Indian Civil Service than the infinitesimal number whose parents could, in existing circumstances, both provide them with an education of the highest University standards and send them to London for the Civil Service Examinations. But "simultaneous examinations" presented the India Office with the

¹ Cf. *Review of Reviews*, April 1893, p. 354: "This conspiracy is on the eve of exposure. When that exposure comes, the conspirators must be broken—no matter how highly they may be placed. The Departmental Committee of Inquiry upon which the Cabinet has decided . . . will of course afford the accused every opportunity of rebutting the serious charges brought against them, but if these charges are not rebutted, it is difficult to see how Lord Lansdowne and Lord Roberts, to name two only . . . can ever again be trusted with power by any government supported by a majority of the House of Commons. . . ."

² Cf. G. W. Clutterbuck, *In India or Bombay the Beautiful*, pp. 179-83, for a significant Methodist missionary view: "With a pertinacity worthy of a better cause, there are those who sedulously endeavour to alarm us as to the health of the British troops in India. For many things *The Times of India* is a most reliable journal, but in this matter it is one of the greatest sinners. . . . Medically . . . the (Contagious Diseases) Acts have been a gigantic failure, and must never be re-imposed. That is the only ground on which some would submit. But morally, the suggestion to re-enact them is infamously wrong, and an outrage on the rights of poor Hindu women. . . ."

³ *Hansard*, June 2, 1893.

⁴ Cf. *English Radicalism, 1853-1886*, p. 370.

nightmare of a future stream of recruitment for the I.C.S. in which the British element was completely submerged by a torrent of "Competition Wallahs". Such a Service, it might be averred, could never retain the respect of the country in the fashion which allowed less than a thousand members of the existing I.C.S. to keep effective control of a population of two hundred and fifty millions. Even "liberal" Anglo-Indians, it should be remembered, hardly believed it to be safe to "Indianise" the I.C.S. to the proportion of more than a third and deemed it essential that the greatest preliminary care should be taken that Indian recruits were provided with something like British "prestige". This British "prestige", it was felt, could hardly be provided better than by submitting recruits to the necessity of taking a London examination, in which success was almost impossible unless candidates came to Europe not merely for the examination but for some preparation beforehand. A period of residence in Britain would, of course, not merely endow the recruit with quasi-British "prestige" but would give some assurance that he would be able to adapt himself to I.C.S. ways. And if it was alleged to be "undemocratic" that only Indians wealthy enough to send their children to Europe could hope to have the slightest chance of seeing them placed in the I.C.S., there was a "liberal" answer even to that. It should not be impossible, it was urged, to persuade wealthy Indians to endow "scholarships" whose beneficiaries might be sent to Britain, and the Indian Government, too, would doubtless be prepared to do something in the same direction if there was both a demand and a willingness to pay the costs.

It is presumably some such line of argument, employed behind the scenes by the India Office, that explains the immediate effects of the Radicals' "simultaneous examinations" success of June 2, 1893. The Government met the resolution of the House of Commons by agreeing to send it on to the Indian Government for consideration.¹ Before long the Indian Government had replied that "simultaneous examinations" were impracticable,² a strong view but one that was speciously justifiable by drawing attention to the difficulty of equating viva voce tests by different examining

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1894, p. 455: "The Government of India have been asked whether they can take steps for carrying this resolution into effect."

² Cf. *Ibid.*, 1895, p. 456: "Papers presented to Parliament on the question of holding simultaneous examinations in England and India contained the answer of the Government of India, saying that it was impossible to carry into practice the resolution passed by the House of Commons in 1893 on the subject."

boards. Advocacy of "simultaneous examinations" was not, of course, brought to an end by the Indian Government's action but undoubtedly the "Gladstonian Radicals" made more noise in the latter part of their majority-time of 1892-5 with another of their characteristic Indian interests—Opium Trade Suppression. Unfortunately, as will be seen, the main beneficiary of this suggested Radical "reform" seemed certain to be China while India, with Revenue problems already grave, seemed likely to be precipitated into bankruptcy. But the whole "Opium Question" deserves a special section to itself.

Ever since the opium traffic from India to China had brought on the unsavoury "Opium War" of 1839-42, strong sections of British opinion, led by philanthropists, Radicals and Friends, had declined to accept the interested arguments of official India.¹ The Indian Government, with valuable Revenue, derived from Indian poppy cultivation for the Chinese market, asserted for almost a century that the Government of Peking was completely unable to suppress the consumption of opium among its subjects. This consumption, moreover, according to Calcutta, claiming to base itself on India's own much-restricted use of opium, was often more medicinal than was commonly realised.² What would happen, even if the Indian product were totally excluded from China, was already indicated by what happened when the Indian product was in short supply. In defiance of Imperial Chinese edicts, the Chinese provinces would begin poppy cultivation on a large scale, and provincial authorities and merchants alike would, for private profit, arrange the smuggling of large consignments from sources not rigidly controlled in China's interest like those under the Indian Government. Supporters of the Indian Government even claimed that there was Indian experience with the Drug and Liquor Traffic, strictly controlled, rigidly supervised, supplying essential Excise Revenue and yet leaving drug- and liquor-users thoroughly tainted in native opinion, which the Chinese Government might study with great profit. Had not the Indian Government itself, when meeting "extremist" and Temperance criticism of its Liquor policy in 1890, shown how present Excise and Revenue

¹ Cf. Joshua Rowntree, *The Imperial Drug Trade* (1st ed., May 1905; 2nd ed., March 1906; 3rd ed., April 1908), for a summary of the protests of these groups, issued when new action was impending by a new Radical majority.

² India's main method of using opium was not inhaling fumes through an opium pipe, but by swallowing opium pills. Opium users were estimated to form two per cent of the population.

considerations were not incompatible with provision for reducing or even gradually ending much questionable or noxious consumption?¹

But after they had forced the Indian Government to terms on the Liquor Traffic in 1890, the "extremist" goaders-on of Calcutta and Simla prepared for a more successful offensive against the Opium Traffic than they had ever achieved before. Thus it was that Sir Joseph Pease, a great coal and iron industrialist whose Quaker philanthropy found its main outlets in the Peace and Anti-Opium Societies, obtained a majority of 160 against 130 for the following resolution of April 10, 1891:²

That this House is of opinion that the system by which the Indian opium revenue is raised is morally indefensible, and would urge upon the Indian Government that it should cease to grant licences for the cultivation of the poppy, and the sale of opium in British India, except to supply the legitimate demand for medical purposes; and that they should at the same time take measures to arrest the transit of Malwa (native state) opium through British territory.

This victory, although the result of Conservative absenteeism from "faddist" private members' business, certainly gave the anti-opiumists a strong bargaining position after the Gladstonian majority of 1892 was obtained. Long negotiation clearly went on behind the scenes during the 1893 Session, and even Gladstone's

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, April 30, 1889, for the two "touring Radical M.P.s," Samuel Smith (Gladstonian) and W. S. Caine (Unionist till re-conversion to Gladstonianism in 1890) beating the India Office by 113 votes against 103 on the following resolution: "That, in the opinion of this House, the fiscal system of the Government of India leads to the establishment of spirit distilleries, liquor and opium shops in large numbers of places, where, till recently, they never existed, in defiance of native opinion and the protests of the inhabitants, and that such increased facilities for drinking produce a steadily increasing consumption, and spread misery and ruin among the industrial classes of India, calling for immediate action on the part of the Government of India with a view to their abatement." Though, in a 400-page supplement to the *Gazette of India*, of March 1, 1890, the Indian Government permitted its defenders to make violent attacks on the alleged misrepresentations of Messrs. Smith and Caine, it did proceed to suggest certain reforms, summarised thus by Mr. Caine in the *Alliance News*, 1890, p. 278:

"Firstly. It has at last been decided to get rid of the pernicious out-still system prevalent in Bengal and many other districts in British India.

"Secondly, it has been decided to tax the strong and very intoxicating beer brewed in India, which hitherto had escaped taxation.

"Thirdly, An increased duty has been levied on imported spirits.

"Fourthly. The principle of Local Option has been recognised for the first time."

² *Hansard*, April 10, 1891.

personal intervention failed to avert division among Government supporters. Thus, on June 30, 1893, this anti-opium resolution was moved:¹

That, having regard to the opinion expressed by the vote of this House on the 10th April 1891, that the system by which the Indian opium revenue is raised is morally indefensible, and which urged the Indian Government to give practical effect to that opinion . . . and recognising that the people of India ought not to be called upon to bear the cost involved in this change of policy, and that oppressive taxation and the stoppage of expenditure necessary for the welfare and progress of the Indian people must be avoided, this House is of opinion that a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire both in India and in this country, and to report as to (1) What retrenchments and reforms can be effected in the military and civil expenditure of India; (2) by what means Indian resources can best be developed; and (3) what, if any, temporary assistance from the British Exchequer would be required to meet any deficit of revenue which would be occasioned by the suppression of the opium traffic.

Mr. Gladstone met this motion by one so "advanced" that he must have had the greatest difficulty behind the scenes to secure the assent of the India Office and the Government of India. Mr. Gladstone's counter-motion ran thus:²

That, having regard to the strong objections urged on moral grounds to the system by which the Indian opium revenue is raised, this House presses on the Government of India to continue their policy of greatly diminishing the cultivation of the poppy, and the production and sale of opium, and desires that an Humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying Her Majesty to appoint a Royal Commission to report as to:

1. Whether the growth of the poppy and manufacture and sale of opium in British India should be prohibited, except for medical purposes, and whether such prohibition could be extended to the Native States;

2. The nature of the existing arrangements with the Native States in respect of the transit of opium through British territory, and on what terms, if any, these arrangements could be with justice terminated;

3. The effect on the finances of India of prohibiting the sale and export of opium, taking into consideration (a) the amount of compensation payable; (b) the cost of the necessary preventive measures; (c) the loss of revenue;

¹ The effect of Gladstone's intervention is possibly to be seen in British Radicals, like Sir J. W. Pease, leaving the resolution to be moved by Alfred Webb, Irish Nationalist M.P. for West Waterford. They seem to have been hopeful of concessions large enough to avert a formal Division.

² *Hansard*, June 30, 1893.

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4. Whether any change short of total prohibition should be made in the system at present followed for regulating and restricting the opium traffic, and for raising a revenue therefrom;

5. The consumption of opium by the different races, and in the different districts of India, and the effect of such consumption on the moral and physical condition of the people:

6. The disposition of the people of India in regard to (a) the use of opium for non-medical purposes; (b) their willingness to bear in whole or in part the cost of prohibitive measures.

But this detailed and apparently generous demarcation of the suggested Opium Commission's scope failed to secure the assent of the "advanced". Desiring to commit the Government forthwith to a future Opium Trade Abolition, they pressed for the change of one vital word in Mr. Gladstone's resolution, a word which would have made the first object of the Commission's inquiries not *whether* but *when* the growth of the poppy and the manufacture and sale of opium should be prohibited. The "advanced" even claimed to have some reason to know that the opposition of one member of the Cabinet—presumably the India Secretary, Lord Kimberley—prevented further concession to them.¹ At any rate they raised as many as 105 votes against 184 when going into the lobby against Mr. Gladstone's unaltered motion. The Commission was, of course, appointed, and it arranged to spend some three months in India and to send schedules of questions to the Straits Settlements, Hong Kong and China as consumers of Indian opium. The seven British commissioners, who had worked with two Indian colleagues, were back in England in the spring of 1894, and on April 22, 1895, three days before the Opium Commission's Report was in Parliament's hands, *The Times* published a lengthy notice which set the tone of friendly Press comment. Yet, essentially it may be said that the Commission had failed to grapple with the admittedly difficult problem of organising its own inquiries. It had put itself more and more inevitably under the tutelage of the India Office at home and the Indian Government abroad, and its Report was naturally quite to the Indian Government's taste. If opium smoking in India, as apart from opium eating, was marked down for ultimate extinction, speedy action was apparently barred by such an over-cautious finding as this: "The authoritative imposition of prohibition by the British Government would be

¹ Cf. Joshua Rowntree, *The Imperial Drug Trade*, p. 116, n. 1.

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keenly resented by the races among whom the use of opium is customary . . . and would be followed by widespread discontent." The demand for special action in Burma, where the opium situation was admittedly grave, was treated as "inexpedient". And, most serious of all, the problem of the harm done China by the Indian export was not merely not investigated directly but the somewhat miscellaneous opinions collected through the agency of the British and Indian Governments seem to have been read with a bias towards the official Indian point of view.¹

The anti-opiumists were soon up in arms against the Report and feared not to declare that it must have been largely written by the Secretariat provided for the Commission by the Indian Government. But times had changed since the confident and pushing Radical days of 1891 and 1893. A reaction against all "faddism" was about to explode with shattering force at the General Election of 1895, and it is not altogether fanciful to see some of its advance indications in the reception given to the anti-opiumists' attack on the Commission and their reiterated demand that, the Report notwithstanding, Parliament should admit that it was pledged to Opium Traffic Abolition by the Pease resolution of 1891. Rosebery's India Secretary, Fowler, refused to see any justification for the anti-opiumist attacks of Pease and Ellis on the Commission for its alleged subservience to the Indian Government.² And the two Front Benches combined to crush the Pease

¹ Cf. *Royal (Opium) Commission Report*, vi, 50-1, for the apparent admission that the majority of the missionaries of all Churches in China "strongly condemn" the opium habit, coupled with the qualification that "others take a less decided view. Of these two may be quoted." It turns out that the missionary proportion of "strong" condemners was 49 to 3, but while two out of the minority of three were misleadingly quoted, no quotation was made from the forty-nine. The treatment of other evidence from China—consular, medical and merchant—also left something to be desired. It was distinctly dubious, for example, to sum up that "the prevailing consular opinion is that opium smoking in moderation is not harmful, and that moderation is the rule".

² Cf. *Hansard*, May 24, 1895. Pease held that "no one could look at the Report without seeing who drew it up, and for what purpose. The Government of India thanked the Commission for their trouble in strengthening the hands of the Government." Ellis claimed to have discovered from Lord Brassey, the Chairman of the Commission, that the history of the anti-opium movement in England contributed by one Indian Civil Servant to the Commission's papers had not originally been asked for by the Commission and that the same was true of another contribution, reaching to 186 pages, which a second Indian Civil Servant had sent in on the history of opium in China. Yet, according to Ellis, he was left to ask for a copy of the letter the Viceroy had sent to the Commission and also for the returns as to the use of opium in the native army which had been collected but never presented.

motion on the moral indefensibility of the Opium Traffic by a vote of 176 against 59.¹

It can hardly be admitted that the "educated classes" in India, with whom the "advanced" of the British House of Commons liked to work, furnished them with any mighty assistance in the "great moral question" of the Opium Traffic. Opium Traffic Abolition as a "cause" lay virtually dead until the Radical revival in Britain and the appearance of the anti-opiumist Ellis in 1905 as Campbell-Bannerman's India Under-Secretary. It was doubtless very hard to work up any moral earnestness in India about a long-established practice whose abolition might mean, perhaps, increased income tax for the "educated classes"—and mainly for the benefit of China. The "educated classes" were apt to show altogether greater interest in questions offering prospects of tax-reduction, and the Royal Commission on Indian Expenditure, appointed in May 1895, represented a last "benefit" in this direction conferred upon India by the moribund Liberal Government of 1892-5. One of the specific tasks set this Commission was the study of the possibly oppressive allocation as between Britain and India of certain joint expenditure. And if British Radicals saw some prospect of relieving the Indian Budget of perhaps £300,000 of annual expense by new Anglo-Indian arrangements on the India Office, Aden, the Persian Gulf and the troopship service between Britain and India,² the "educated classes" hoped to find an opportunity of proving how altogether greater relief might be brought by a curtailment of the "excessive" costs of British civil and military administration. Of late, the India Office with its large and expensive staff in London had been specially on "educated Indians'" minds for, though wholly maintained so far by the Indian

¹ *Hansard*, May 24, 1895, Fowler protested against hasty attacks on the Commission, composed as it was of distinguished men of great knowledge and experience.

² Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1901, pp. 482-3: "The Royal Commission on Indian expenditure, appointed in 1895, at length reported in 1900 (*Cd.* 131). . . . The third chapter is concerned with the apportionment of expenditure on common interests between England and India. The Report of the majority of the Commission recommends generally a liberal treatment of India in such matters; and in particular, proposes grants to be made by the Imperial Government to the amount of £293,000 annually, this sum being composed of £50,000 in aid of the charge of the India Office, £108,000 as half the military charge for Aden, £5,000 increased contribution to the charge of the Persian Mission, and £130,000 as half the cost of the transport of troops to and from India. There is a Minority Report which . . . goes beyond the recommendations of the Majority Report in the matter of expenses to be taken over by the Imperial Government from the Indian Exchequer."

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Budget, not the slightest "Indianisation" had yet been attempted either in the subordinate posts or in the advisory but very important India Council, still entirely composed, it was complained, of superannuated and reactionary Anglo-Indians.¹ Dadabhai Naoroji, who had contrived with some Radical help to become Gladstonian M.P. for Central Finsbury between 1892-5, would doubtless have considered himself a fitter appointment for the India Council than most of its actual members.² And the same would, perhaps, have been true of Mancherjee Bhownaggree,³ despite his entry into Parliament for N.E. Bethnal Green in 1895 as the follower of Lord Salisbury, a Prime Minister whose return to power seems automatically to have postponed India Council "Indianisation" until Morley's arrival at the India Office in Campbell-Bannerman's more Radical days.

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1896, pp. 155-6. India Office expense is given at £133,808 and of some thirty listed names not one is Indian. The India Council is given as follows: "Vice-President, Sir A. C. Lyall, K.C.B.; B. W. Currie; Field-Marshal Sir D. M. Stewart, Bt., G.C.B.; Major-General Sir O. T. Burne, K.C.S.I.; R. Hardie; Sir A. J. Arbuthnot, K.C.S.I.; Sir J. B. Peile, K.C.S.I.; Sir C. A. Turner, K.C.S.I.; General Sir A. Alison, Bt., G.C.B.; C. H. T. Crosthwaite, K.C.S.I.; Sir S. C. Bayley, K.C.S.I., each £1,200 per annum."

² Cf. *Men and Women of the Time* (15th ed., 1899), pp. 789-90, for a biographical account permitting an estimate of the position of this foremost of "Congress" personalities. Born at Bombay in 1825 and son of a Parsee priest, he had received an English education at the institution that had already become Elphinstone College when he was elected in 1854 as its first Indian Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy. In 1855 he left Bombay for England, as a member of the first Indian firm established in London and Liverpool and, during a stay lasting on this occasion until 1864, he played some part in helping such Radical friends of India as John Bright and Henry Fawcett to prepare the Indian briefs they were to argue before Parliament. He apparently already had in mind plans for "simultaneous examinations" and the bestowal of equal rights for natives of India in the Indian Civil Service. Back in London in 1867, Naoroji busied himself with the foundation of the East India Association and with political pamphleteering on India's behalf. This pamphleteering doubtless had something to do with the safeguarding of a place for Indian natives in the I.C.S. under the Government of India Act of 1870, and the appointment of the Select Committee of 1873 to inquire into Indian finances. And it was after further experience as Prime Minister of Baroda in 1874, Bombay Municipal Councillor after 1875, Bombay Legislative Councillor, 1885-7, Gladstonian Parliamentary candidate 1886, and President of the second Indian National Congress, 1886 that Naoroji arrived in the House of Commons to inspire the "simultaneous examinations" struggle of 1893, and to demand the inquiry into Indian expenditure which was accorded in 1895, with himself as one of the Commissioners.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 93-4, for this much more Conservative Parsee, born in 1851, educated at Elphinstone College, and placed in charge of the Bombay Government's Bharnagar Agency on his father's death in 1872. Of his views when he arrived in Parliament we are told that he "holds firmly to the belief that British rule has given her (India) an unprecedented period of peace, and of opportunities for material progress. . . . Any movements which tend to shake the foundations of that rule he strongly deprecates. . . ."

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One of the problems inherited by Salisbury's Administration was a dispute on the India Cotton Duties. Early in 1894 the Indian Government, in sore need of revenue, had found it necessary to resolve on a departure from India's very large measure of "Free Trade" and to impose a 5 per cent duty on a wide variety of hitherto tax-free imports. The omission of cotton goods from the list of newly taxed imports had been seized upon by the bulk of "educated native opinion" as justifying the loudest protests against their Government's partiality for Lancashire which, it was alleged, was being unwisely and unnecessarily helped to retain all its tremendous advantages against the infant cotton industry of India.¹ Later in the year, indeed, Lord Elgin, the new Viceroy, had seen fit to add cotton imports to the taxed list though Indian-produced yarns were also required to contribute to the revenue through an excise-scheme of approximately proportionate yield.² But India's new cotton capitalists found the altered plan almost less to their taste than the original and they could rely on "educated native opinion" to neglect the needs both of the ryot and the revenue whenever a case against British "selfishness" was to be maintained. Early in 1896 Lord George Hamilton, Salisbury's India Secretary, sanctioned Elgin's reduction of the cotton excise from an estimated level of 5 per cent to one of $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent though this was balanced by reducing the tariff similarly. From this settlement the Salisbury Government determined not to depart.

If "advanced" Parliamentarians in Britain could not quarrel whole-heartedly with Salisbury on the Cotton Duties, the same was hardly true of the issues raised by the blaze-up along the Himalayan Frontier in 1897.³ The Opposition Front Bench had

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1895, p. 456, for a revealing, if succinct, account: "In India the most important act of the Legislature was the Tariff Act (No. VIII of 1894), imposing duties, generally at 5 per cent ad valorem, on goods imported into India, with the exception of cotton goods. The exemption of cotton goods from the tax caused much outcry in India, as it was felt to have been due to the pressure of Lancashire interests, and the additional revenue was needed to prevent an estimated deficit."

² Cf. *Ibid.*, 1896, p. 457: "The Act of the Indian Legislatures in this period (1894-5) which aroused most discussion was the Act (XVI of 1894) which amended the Indian Tariff Act of the same year, by depriving cotton goods of the exemption from duty which they had hitherto enjoyed, and making certain other amendments in the law. Side by side with this Act was passed Act XVII of 1894, imposing excise duties on cotton yarns produced in British Indian mills. . . . The object of Act XVII was to avoid protecting Indian goods so far as they competed with English goods. It is a question whether protection is altogether avoided. . . ."

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 1897, p. 457, for an interesting bird's eye view of "India in Parliament . . . in 1895-6". The following quotation is remarkably pithy and

early warned the Salisbury Government against undertaking a permanent occupation of Chitral whither an expeditionary force had had to be sent which Opposition had fully intended to withdraw. The Salisbury Government had not taken Opposition's advice so that when in 1897 India, suffering already from plague, famine and the after-effects of the great Assam earthquake of 1896, had a great tribal outbreak added to its problems, Opposition did not spare Ministers. Forces totalling 60,000 men had finally to undertake arduous Himalaya campaigns before the situation was righted, and, even in 1898, Opposition was still bitterly critical of the burdens which had been added to the Budget of sorely tried India by alleged Conservative inability to withstand the insidious temptations of "frontier-rectification". 1897 had certainly not been the ideal Diamond Jubilee year for the Indian Government and, indeed, the Jubilee celebrations at Poona had allowed Indian political Terrorism to undertake its first assassinations in a fashion which seemed to threaten British officialdom with some of the anxieties Nihilist plotters brought in Russia and Anarchist conspirators elsewhere. The situation seemed at first the more anxious because the Indian Government, in its efforts to stop the plague,¹ had been compelled to authorise search and other measures which had given "disaffected vernacular writers" unique chances of savagely attacking the authorities under the pretence of exclusive concern for caste-laws and zenana- and harem-sanctity.²

exact: "The Indian matters to which the attention of Parliament was principally drawn in this period were—the retention of Chitral, the occupation of Kafiristan (including the Bashgal valley) by the Amir of Afghanistan, the Anglo-French agreement relating to Siam, the deposition of the Maharaj Rana of Jhallawar, the Indian Budget, the charge against Indian revenues of the ordinary expenses of the troops sent to Suakim, and the alteration of the Indian Cotton Duties. . . . The Royal Commission on Indian Expenditure commenced its sittings in 1896, and examined a number of witnesses. Two volumes of evidence (First Report, vols. I and II, C. 8,258 and 8,259) have been issued."

¹ It is worth remembering that the situation had an international aspect and that the Indian Government was face to face with the possibility of a serious breakdown of Indian commerce if some of the nations, who feared the contagion, had actually put ships from Indian ports into the strict quarantine which was, at one stage, under contemplation.

² Cf. *Cassell's Illustrated History of England*, ix, 88-90, for this very "British" account: "The plague, indeed, seemed to assume the permanency of a seven years' tenant, a period of possession predicted for it by certain Job's comforters. In anxious effort to stamp it out, Lord Elgin, humane but hardly cautious of the prejudices of caste, sanctioned search and restrictive measures which, whilst they would have made Christians merely grumble, set the blood of the conservative and zenana and hareem-ridden Hindus and Mohammedans boiling. In the early part of the year a recrudescence of the plague in Bombay sent the mortality from this cause up to 20 per cent of the total deaths. It stalked the presidency,

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It would, perhaps, be interesting to give a typical "British" account expressing the original alarm and the later relief when it was discovered that the first Terrorism of 1897 was still an isolated exhibition and that it might even be "unwise" to apply the newly strengthened Sedition Laws so drastically against the native Press as to goad Radical and Irish critics into Parliamentary action. Here is *Cassell's Illustrated History of England* giving a "popular" account, in 1902, of the Indian situation as it had been in 1897:¹

Notwithstanding the superlative success with which the Diamond Jubilee Rejoicings had passed in England, a shadow fell on the day in India, where indeed the year was one of woe. On the 22nd of June Lord Sandhurst, the Governor of Bombay, gave a reception at Government House, Ganeshkind, Poonah, to celebrate the auspicious occasion. Poonah was formerly the capital of the Mahratta dominion that preceded British rule in India, and now shares with Lower Bengal the unenviable notoriety of being the abiding-place of the most intelligent and most seditious sections of the native population of India. Fortunately the effeminate and wily Bengali, and the crafty Mahratta Brahmin, who inflate grievances and exhale disloyalty in the vernacular press, are rather excrescences than types of the people in general. An essentially vicious excrescence was Damadar Chapekar Deccani, who, in the dusk of the evening of the 22nd of June, shot dead Lieutenant Ayerst and mortally wounded Mr. Rand of the Civil Service as they were returning in their carriages from Lord Sandhurst's reception. The assassin escaped, and a reward of Rs.20,000 (about £1,330) was offered for his capture; but it was not until the 4th October following that the clever Bombay Police ran him to earth.

He confessed not only to the murders, but to having been the perpetrator of an abominable outrage—the tarring of the Queen's statue at Bombay—which had disgusted European and native opinion some months previously. Damadar Chapekar duly suffered the extreme penalty of the law, and a heavy punishment was inflicted on the citizens of Poonah by a punitive police force being quartered in their midst at their own cost.

Damadar Chapekar was a somewhat vainglorious youth, far from and the most extraordinary precautions were taken to outwit it. These led to some of the severest strictures on Government that ever emanated from a press particularly prone to criticise, and never so pleased as when it could do so under the garb of violated morality. Anonymous leaflets fluttered in the air, disseminating sedition. There were several popular demonstrations, and a most alarming riot at Chitpore, a suburb of Calcutta, on the 30th June. Europeans, even ladies, were insulted and attacked in the public streets; the pumping station at Entalla was besieged by a desperate mob, and only relieved in the nick of time. . . . For a couple of days a third of the city of Calcutta was in the hands of a furiously anti-British mob; and the entire press was gloating over the humiliation of the white man. Six hundred rioters were killed in quelling the outbreak. . . ."

¹ *Cassell's Illustrated History of England*, ix, 88.

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being wholly bad, who might even have made a moderately good subject but for the pernicious teaching of the vernacular press. Under the somewhat easy rule of Lord Elgin Indian editors had been gradually taking advantage. . . . The Poonah tragedy gave the Government of India a rude shock, and it awoke in somewhat of a panic and dashed into flurried action. A series of prosecutions was launched against journals and journalists, the most important being that against Ganghadar Tilak, a Mahratta Brahmin and a highly educated man, who, on his return from a visit to England, was arrested on a charge of inciting and attempting to incite disaffection. He fought his case with great skill and not without dignity to the doors of the Privy Council, which confirmed the sentence of eighteen months' imprisonment passed on him, after conviction by a carefully selected jury, by the judges of the Bombay High Court. Intellectual and progressive native opinion watched the case with the keenest and most critical interest, and elevated Tilak to the height of a racial martyr; but the firmness with which he was handled had a good effect. In other prosecutions Government were less fortunate or less happy, and in one at least a Mofasil judge showed a spirit of vindictiveness, properly reprovved by the Bombay High Court, which reduced his sentences of lifelong and seven years' transportation to one year and three months respectively. . . . A *moulvie* at Lucknow, who could not hold his tongue, was properly sentenced, in the first instance, to a year's simple imprisonment. And with these exhibitions of authority the crusade killed its victims and itself . . .

There are incidental allusions above which make it obvious that though Lord Elgin, a "Liberal" and a nominee of Gladstone's, had been allowed to persevere with such typical "Liberalism" as a light hand for the Press and brand-new Legislative Councils for Burma and the Punjab, he was yet subjected to Conservative criticism when storms began to arise. And certainly the Conservative Curzon's first Viceregal quinquennium, begun in January 1899, seemed outwardly to be a less anxious time than Elgin's, despite the continuance of grave famine problems and the obvious dangers to British "prestige" from the long series of set-backs in the South African War.¹ Radical and Irish Nationalist criticism there was, of course, based often on the information of such Englishmen as William Digby² and Mr. Rogers, as well as on that supplied by experienced Indians like Romesh Dutt and Dadabhai Naoroji. Indeed, in the Minority Report of the Commission on

¹ Cf. Lord Ronaldshay's two volumes on *The Life of Lord Curzon*.

² This persistent British "friend of India" had been Secretary of the Indian Famine Relief Fund, 1877-8 and, after more than twenty years of pamphleteering support for India, issued in Curzon's time a huge volume on Indian poverty, grounded on disquieting official returns and statistics, though marked by incessant and bitter attacks on the Indian Government.

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Indian Expenditure, signed in 1900 by the three Radical representatives who had been nominated to the Commission in 1895—Sir William Wedderburn, W. S. Caine and Naoroji—Radicals could find plenty to press for besides those considerable Revenue adjustments in favour of India which the Majority Report approved. Caine, for example, discussing the Indian Famine Commission in Parliament on February 3, 1902, stressed India's terrible poverty, demanded a prompt reduction of military and civil expenditure and hesitated not to suggest both that India's heavy burden of official pensions could be reduced and that India was being made to support an unnecessarily large military force for Britain's convenience outside India as well as in.¹ On April 3, 1900, again, Wedderburn, the distinguished Anglo-Indian who had presided over the Indian National Congress of 1889, co-operated with Samuel Smith, "a touring Radical M.P." as "notorious" as Caine, in insisting that Indian Famine was largely the result of the oppressive Land Revenue, Smith going on to improve the occasion by urging the appointment of Romesh Dutt to a then vacant place in the India Council as one who really understood what depletion of agricultural resources oppressive collection of the Land Revenue entailed.² And just as Caine held the view that the military numbers on the Indian Budget were kept too high because Britain found it convenient to have a large reserve of troops available east of Suez whose services were only put upon the British Exchequer for the duration of an emergency—and then often on a niggardly scale³—so Smith took the view that one of the

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, February 3, 1902, for Caine's desire to lengthen the period of service before a pension was earned and his disbelief in any real military danger from Russia. "There is no fear of Russian invasion", he asserted, "for a hundred years to come, even if Russia desired it."

² Cf. *Ibid.*, April 3, 1900: "When in India I met with the greatest complaints about the land assessments. The natives insisted that they were heavily over-assessed, and when the settlement arrived they were in a state of terror, and had to bribe the corrupt native under-officials to get a fair return made to the revenue officer. I notice that large additions have recently been made to the land assessments. The Central Provinces are the poorest part of India; they are suffering terribly from the famine, as they did from the last one three years ago, and I ask the House to listen to what a very able civil servant, Mr. Romesh Dutt, says about them. . . . It is quite impossible that the Indian peasantry can be prosperous. . . . Need we wonder that the great bulk of them are hopelessly in debt to the moneylender. . . ?"

³ There had been cases in the past (Cf. *English Radicalism, 1853-1886*, pp. 370, 374) when Fawcett as "Member for India" had hotly challenged the British Treasury's proposed payment for Indian troops and there had recently been similar trouble when the British Treasury proposed to leave on the Indian Budget the "ordinary expenses" of Indian troops, used from Suakim against the Mahdists, and to put upon the British Budget only their "extraordinaries".

factors that had made for Famine had been that the Indian Government had overspent on railway equipment, bought from England, as compared with irrigation works directly helpful to Indian agriculture. According to Smith the British iron and engineering industries were partly responsible for the fact that 300 millions had been spent on railways and only thirty millions on irrigation and that irrigation was still claiming only a million annually of Public Works capital expenditure while railways were taking eight to ten millions.¹

Pointed as these criticisms were, they had little direct effect on "public opinion", for the nearly empty House in which Indian business was normally conducted was the despair of "reformers".² The "reformers" themselves, moreover, regarded it as one of their principal aims to convert—or at least to impress—the Indian Civil Service, for even Caine was ready to accept it as "the ablest Civil Service that the world has ever produced",³ while Smith was sufficiently persuaded of Curzon's administrative zeal and efficiency to call for a second term of office when Curzon had only been installed for sixteen months of his first. According to Smith, speaking in the House of Commons on April 3, 1900:⁴

the Viceroy and the Provincial Governors do not remain long enough to gauge the situation so as to carry out a great policy. Above all things, continuity of policy is what is needed; and I would venture the suggestion that where a Viceroy like Lord Curzon shows exceptional capacity, and masters a huge problem like that of irrigation, he should get a second term of office. His value would be double to India in his second

Caine, of course, was raising the larger question of why in 1900, for example, the Indian military establishment had been large enough to spare over 7,000 white troops for South Africa and 20,000 native troops for China.

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, April 3, 1900, as quoted at the head of this chapter.

² J. Newton, *W. S. Caine, M.P.*, pp. 243-4: "It is one of the puzzles to anyone who has looked into these matters, however superficially, that the members of the House of Commons should habitually desert the green benches when Indian questions are under discussion, unless it is a matter of a frontier war. If a house of forty or fifty assembles, the faithful few who champion the cause of the Indian peasant are elated with their success. So it has been for years, with rare exceptions. There are happily signs of greater interest being taken in the present House of Commons (written in 1907 of the House elected in 1906), and whether it is due to the personality of the Secretary of State for India, Mr. John Morley, or a growing interest in our great dependency, or a combination of both, it can only be a matter of congratulation. . . ."

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 241-2. In the full context the passage runs: "I have nothing but the profoundest admiration for the ablest Civil Service that the world has ever produced, and I would not dare to criticise its methods or call in question its results unless I was driven to it by hard realities of failure."

⁴ Cf. Samuel Smith, *My Life-Work*, pp. 442-3.

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term of office. There is nothing India needs so much as a strong continuous policy. A benevolent despotism suits Asiatics best, and therefore when native States happen to have a good ruler he is almost worshipped by the natives. What India wants is a modern Akbar.

Unfortunately, as it turned out, Curzon was, perhaps, too easily intoxicated by the Oriental pomp and sycophancy amid which he lived into believing that he was the modern Akbar. Against his meritorious Famine Relief and his busy appointment of Commissions on irrigation, railways, universities, agricultural banks¹ and police, there must be set his over-emphasis on formal precedence and ceremony and his over-attention, while "educated India" was scornfully neglected, to such affairs of pure pomp and display as conspicuous Indian representation at the 1902 Coronation celebrations in London and lavish grandeur for the Imperial Coronation Durbar, held at Delhi on January 1, 1903. Curzon's self-importance was already running him into danger when he determined, in 1903, to force the Tibet Government to terms on India's North-East Frontier. Nor were home and Indian critics altogether silenced by the comparative success and bloodlessness of the Tibet operations. Certainly they were ready to make plenty of trouble on Afghanistan when Curzon, back in India for a second Viceregal term after consultations in London, took over the direction of the possibly dangerous negotiations with the Amir that had been entrusted to the "Special Mission" which had just reached Kabul.²

But, if on March 29, 1905, it could be announced that agreement had been safely reached with Afghanistan, Curzon must already have been deep in his troubles with Lord Kitchener, Indian Commander-in-Chief since 1902 and determined not to be dictated to by the Viceroy on matters military. Meanwhile Curzon's Congress opponents had been given an ideal weapon for agitation by his division of Bengal into two. There was certainly an administrative case for the change but Curzon was proved by

¹ Cf. H. W. Wolff, *People's Banks* (1st ed., 1893; 2nd ed., 1897), for one of the sources from which the Indian Government had derived the idea of attempting to free the ryot from the moneylender. An Act for promoting Co-operative Credit Societies resulted. H. W. Wolff's *Co-operation in India* (1st ed., 1919; 2nd ed., 1927) has further information.

² Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1906, pp. 391-2, for the following dates:

December 10, 1904. The British Mission arrived at Kabul.

December 13, 1904. Lord Curzon arrived at Calcutta and reassumed the office of Viceroy.

December 26, 1904. Twentieth Session of the Indian National Congress opened.

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events to have been largely blind to the hot Hindu feeling that it would evoke, a feeling strong enough to mount from the *swadeshi* stage of boycotted British goods¹ to most dangerous Terroristic plotting, and quite incapable of being reduced to quiescence by all the "Indianisation" in prospect after Morley and Ellis took Radicalism to the India Office in December 1905. Curzon had, meanwhile, left India in August 1905 after having failed to get the Home Government to take his side against Kitchener, and a quieter and less ambitious Viceroy, Lord Minto, had been sent out in November, just before Conservatism had fallen in England.² As a Conservative nominee, working under the supervision of the huge Radical majority returned to Parliament in January 1906, Minto was compelled to pay a good deal more attention to "advanced" opinion than Curzon had done. If he, too, needed not to heed overmuch the most "advanced" British school of thought on India, that headed by the Socialist Hyndman and denouncing the British system in India "as the most criminal misrule that has ever afflicted humanity",³ a milder school of sympathisers with the Indian National Congress was more strongly represented in the Parliament of 1906 than ever before. And here is *The Reformers' Year Book*, 1907, voicing early dissatisfaction:⁴

Thirty years ago, when Lord Ripon was Viceroy, there seemed every prospect that India would be accorded increasing freedom under British rule, and when a few years later the National Congress was formed by the "intellectuals" it evoked no national enthusiasm. . . . But 20 years of British rule, with no further democratic institutions, and no regard being paid to the wishes of the Indian people, while the increasing economic destitution on the part of the "ryots" has become more manifest with each recurring famine, have worked a remarkable change. To-day the Congress has behind it an enormous body of popular opinion, and it must sooner or later form a force which can no longer be resisted.

There has already been manifested within their ranks the division of opinion which always arises in such cases, and which exists to-day in

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1906, p. 397, under September 22nd: "Great meetings held in Calcutta to protest against the partition of Bengal", and under September 29th: "A meeting of nearly 50,000 persons in the Kalighat Temple at Calcutta resolved to boycott foreign goods, on account of the proposed partition of Bengal."

² Cf. Ronaldshay's *Life of Curzon*, i, 293, for Minto's having been a Viceregal possibility when Curzon was appointed in 1898.

³ Cf. *Colonies and Dependencies* (Hyndman, 1904), p. 14; also Hyndman's pamphlet of 1907, *The Unrest in India*. Beside them Keir Hardie's letters to the *Labour Leader* from India in 1907 are almost mild.

⁴ *The Reformers' Year Book*, 1907, pp. 181-2.

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Russia, viz. the division into Constitutionalists and Revolutionists. The Constitutionalist Party still look to the British Government to give them what they want. . . . On the other hand, the extreme party led by Mr. Tylak and Bepin Chandra Pal, have come to the conclusion that reform is only to be obtained by direct conflict with British authority.

Every day that the British Government delays to meet the wishes of the former, carries over to the camp of the extremists an additional number. . . .

Up to the present the Mohammedans have kept outside the Congress movement. . . . In British India their attitude has been one of continued friendliness to the British Government, but they are beginning to see that Governments yield only to pressure. . . .

The action of the Liberal Government with regard to India has been extremely unsatisfactory. In the first place, Mr. Morley refused to reopen the question of the partition of Bengal, and the only step that he took which was at all calculated to meet the feeling of the people of India was the bringing about of the resignation of Sir Bamfylde Fuller. . . .

One of the worst features of the Government of India is, that while it is not responsible to Indian opinion, it is not even responsible in practice to the British House of Commons. The salary of the Secretary of India is not upon the British estimates, and therefore his actions do not come under the attention of the British House of Commons. This is radically wrong, and on July 20th (1906) Keir Hardie moved that in future this change should be effected. He was resisted by Mr. Morley, but supported by a large number of the Liberal and Radical members, and the Government was only saved from defeat by the assistance of Tory votes.

It is obvious why Morley was already urging the Viceroy on towards a consideration of what became known as the Morley-Minto Reforms, carried through Parliament in 1909, and why, as early as August 1907, the first two natives of India were nominated to the India Council in London.

CHAPTER XXV

LONDON

“ . . . the Corporation of the City holds its property and its privileges in trust, not for that square mile of which the Guildhall is the centre, but for the 5,000,000 people dwelling in the 2,000 miles of streets who now constitute the real London—the London which is entitled to regard itself as heir to the property, and to all those great traditions and associations of which the Corporation is the trustee. . . .

“I do not think that this proposition can be seriously controverted—that the unity of London . . . is not only incomplete, but impossible, so long as the government of the City of London is not improved and reformed. . . . The sound and statesmanlike course to take would be first to amalgamate the Corporation of the City and the County Council. . . . The next step would be to substitute for the existing vestries district councils acting within such areas and clothed with such functions as I have described. . . . But what does the Bill do? It creates a new set of authorities . . . which are to have the style and status of municipal boroughs. Sir, I said a few moments ago that I would not quarrel about a name, but when you call these new authorities municipal boroughs you are giving them a false name. . . . The whole theory of the (Municipal Reform) Act of 1835 was that as a town extended its boundary the people outside were entitled to regard themselves as part and parcel of the community which they adjoined. The Government by this Bill are doing exactly the reverse. They take a community in which there are tens and hundreds of thousands sleeping in one quarter, working in another, finding amusement in a third, and the exercise of their social and philanthropic zeal in yet a fourth. Geographically, socially, industrially, politically it is a whole; and there is a complete and unbroken continuity in that which you have parcelled out into a series of artificial sections and blocks which, call them whatever you please, are nothing else than areas created by the ruler and the paint-brush on the map. I will take as a crucial illustration Greater Westminster. You take the Strand, St. George's, Hanover Square, and St. James's, and lump them together. This hybrid body you artificially create, and by a kind of grand larceny you appropriate to it the historic name of Westminster. That is what I venture to call municipal jerry-building. . . . We deprecate any scheme which, on the pretext of the exercise of powers which may not unfairly be given to particular localities, will yet take

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away from the central authority of the representatives of London as a whole, that undivided power and authority which ought to belong to the central body alone. . . .

"... it is put forward as a scheme to effect indirectly what, after the authoritative pronouncement of London opinion last year, no one would attempt directly to effect—to surround and buttress the unreformed City with a ring of sham municipalities; to impair and destroy in most material particulars the corporate and administrative unity of London as a whole. . . ."

Mr. Asquith argues the Progressive case against the London Government Bill, *Hansard*, March 23, 1899.

THE attempt of a whole generation of London Radical leaders to secure a representative Municipal Council with wide powers for the entire capital produced, in 1888, the very limited concession of the London County Council. For the basic functions of urban government—paving, street-watering and cleansing, public lighting, house-refuse removal and the rest—the capital was still left to the archaic apparatus of the City in the centre and, beyond the City's narrow confines, to the inefficient, unco-ordinated and often corrupt attentions of twenty-three Parish Vestries and fifteen District Boards. Poor Relief remained the province of thirty Boards of Guardians with a Metropolitan Common Poor Fund and a Metropolitan Asylums Board to crown the edifice. And if Vestries, District Boards and Boards of Guardians caused unending complaint in a "democratic age" because of the "injustices" attending property qualifications and, in the case of the Guardians, plural voting, too,¹ the Metropolitan Police system seemed much worse, for here the ratepayer was denied all control over the force which he supported. Outside the City, which had managed to preserve most of its police powers, the Home Secretary had sole charge, and neither Vestry nor ratepayer had the slightest claim to attention. The London School Board also retained its entire powers, and so the London County Council seemed, at first, to be offered very little more than the duties of the deposed Metropolitan Board of Works. This body, made up of representatives from the Vestries, the District Boards and the City, had been set up in 1855 principally for the purpose of providing London, very belatedly, with a system of main drainage, but as the one metropolitan authority, engaged in civil engineering on the largest scale, it had almost inevitably received one extension of jurisdiction after another. Parliament had been especially pleased with the Board's success in embanking the Thames and so, after having been made the Fire Brigade authority, it was entrusted with such other tasks in the Metropolis as the purchase and management of open spaces, the acquisition of privately owned bridges across the Thames and their liberation from toll and, finally, the novel slum-clearance and rehousing operations empowered by the Artisans' Dwellings Act. By this time, moreover, it had borrowed very heavily on the London market and

¹ Cf. *English Radicalism, 1853-1886*, pp. 388-93.

had, in fact, also become the intermediary through which Vestries and District Boards borrowed for their own limited local schemes.¹ Yet, before the end, the Board's prestige had fallen so low because of the general suspicion that contractors and gas- and water-companies had obtained corrupt influence that a Conservative Government agreed, in 1888, to the transfer of its powers to a London County Council, directly and almost "democratically elected".²

It is possible that even Ritchie when, as President of the Local Government Board, he persuaded his brother-Conservatives to agree to the establishment of a London County Council, believed that the combination of Metropolitan Board and County powers he was offering would temporarily satisfy the ambitions of London's "progressives". Shrewd though he was, Ritchie hardly saw reason to suspect that his inevitable "concession" of "democratic election" to a body whose main interests would apparently lie in drainage, street-widening, fire-stations, bridges and embankments, music-hall licensing and the rest, could make more problems than the London School Board had done. School Board "progressives" had, in their time, maddened "hard-working ratepayers" by their "sentimental extravagances" with Board school pianos and French, and there had repeatedly been the loudest Church alarms concerning the Board's alleged predilection for planting its "secular" schools where they inflicted the greatest damage upon the schools maintained by religious agencies. The result had always been a "reaction",³ persuading new classes to look to Conservatism for salvation, and "reaction" might become more pronounced if the London County Council should assume a more extremist "progressive" tone than had customarily reigned at the London School Board.

There was much to justify this Conservative confidence in some of the difficulties which the apostles of "progress" on the London

¹ Cf. *Local Government and Taxation in the United Kingdom* (Cobden Club, 1882), pp. 180-97. The Board's debt was, in 1880, £18,253,536, its income £3,157,988 and its expenditure £3,841,262.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 242-3, for criticism of the Board's failure to take a favourable opening against the alleged extortion of the gas-companies: "No reason can be given for this monstrous course of procedure, except that which has been given in other equally inexplicable cases, that the members of the Board have been influenced by considerations which have not been known to the public. . . ."

³ This reaction was strongly instanced in the election of the Rev. J. R. Diggle to the first clerical Chairmanship of the Board in 1885 and his re-election by the "religious education" party in 1888 and 1892. (Cf. *Men and Women of the Time*, 15th ed., 1899.)

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County Council speedily encountered. The Courts, for instance, decided that the two women "progressives" who had obtained membership, Miss Cobden and Miss Cons, were ineligible;¹ the Council's efforts against the worst type of music-hall brought much unpleasant ridicule; and it speedily transpired that a "reform", loudly advocated by the friends of "municipal progress", involved them in the sad necessity of asking for rates considerably higher than those of the Metropolitan Board of Works.² Yet the ambition and "progressive" energy that had been released by the sense of representing and, in a measure, directing the world's largest capital was not to be quenched even by serious disappointments. There were, for example, tremendous plans of metropolitan integration under which the Poor Law, the Police, and Education would have been taken over by County Council Committees, the Vestries, the District Boards and the City have become subordinated authorities, working under direction, and, finally, Gas, Water, Markets, Docks and Tramways have been "municipalised" in the most ambitious "Collectivist" programme ever devised in Britain.³ And if the programme as a whole was too Socialist even for the bulk of County Council "progressives", the anti-Socialists of the Liberty and Property Defence League soon saw good reason to fear the danger of its partial adoption by piecemeal. The free ferry-service across the Thames at Woolwich, ordained in the County Council's very first days, seemed a dreadful enough portent.⁴ The County Council had adopted the argument that, as so many bridges had been freed from toll at the public cost during the last dozen years, Woolwich, which contributed to the charges but could not be provided with a bridge owing to

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1891, under November 24, 1890, for Miss Cobden's eventual punishment for ignoring the Courts' views: "Judgement for £150 given against Miss Cobden for acting as a member of the London County Council, for which, being a woman, she was not qualified."

² Cf. *Ibid.*, under April 1, 1890: "The London County Council voted an increase in the rates by 1½d. in the pound." This was one of the first results of abolishing the coal duty of thirteen pence per ton, hitherto collected by the City on coal coming within fifteen miles of St. Paul's. The City had kept 4d. for its own street improvements and allowed the Metropolitan Board 9d. but had been attacked for a generation for putting on the coal-consumer charges that should have been borne by the ratepayer.

³ Cf. *The London Programme* as issued in book form by Sidney Webb in 1891. While Webb's plan was more ambitious than most in regard to "municipalisation" of utilities, it marked some retreat from Firth's earlier hopes of absorbing Education and the Poor Law within the Council's framework.

⁴ Cf. *Annual Register*, 1889, Chronicle, under March 23rd: "The first free ferry on the Thames, plying between North and South Woolwich, opened by the London County Council, under the presidency of Lord Rosebery."

its position down river, below the principal docks, had a just claim to a free ferry-service. From this position it seemed but a step to the next Fabian argument that workmen, who could not find house-room within walking distance of their employment and who, in fact, eased the chronic overcrowding at London's centre by living farther out, possessed a good moral right to claim free transportation on municipal trams.¹

Though fear of the "Socialism", with which the "progressives" of the County Council were held to be infected, led Conservative Ministers to eye their proposals with distrust, they could not be denied, for example, the new Technical Education powers allotted County Councils generally in 1890 or substantial new housing powers under each of the three parts of the 1890 Housing Act. Nor could amiable if somewhat "Socialist" experiments in the provision of new amenities in the parks and open spaces be prevented, a kindlier if more costly asylum administration, and a more ambitious establishment for the London Fire Brigade. But it was not primarily on ambitious municipalism in such directions that the County Council and Conservatives fell out. Conservatives were resolved that no police powers in the world's wealthiest capital could be given to a Council charged with a weakness for pandering to the mob and a constant tendency to be less than just to "property". And if the "progressives" were half resigned to the necessity of delaying any big movement for police powers until Lord Salisbury's Government should have fallen,² they saw no necessity, in the interim, to refrain from expressing their views on ground landlords, or, it might be, metropolitan tramway companies when they had the occasion. Thus, in 1890, when the Council's Strand Improvement Bill was drawn up to permit the building of what became Kingsway and the Aldwych, the

¹ Cf. *The London Programme*, p. 211: "Then as to locomotion. In order to relieve the pressure of population in the centre and reduce the rents of the metropolitan 'Connaughts', the County Council tramways will doubtless be made as free as its roads and bridges. Taxes on locomotion are universally condemned, and the economic effects of a penny tram fare are precisely the same as those of a tax on the trip. . . . Free trams may well imply free trains in the metropolitan and suburban area. Does not the Council already run a free service of steamboats on the Thames at North Woolwich—eventually, no doubt, to be extended all along the stream?"

² Cf. A. G. Gardiner, *John Benn and the Progressive Movement*, pp. 107–9, for Benn agreeing to give up his strong resolution of April 9, 1889, for a weaker, if more tactful, one describing the existing position as unjust and unworthy of the first city of the Empire and expressing the Council's confidence that Parliament would at the earliest moment supplement its scheme of municipal government for London by transferring the management of the civic police to the Council.

"progressives" attempted to win authority to impose a supplementary "betterment rate" on all property that was estimated to have gained in value from the demolition of noxious rookeries and slums in their neighbourhood and the substitution of fine streets offering altogether better approaches. Though the friends of "property" defeated the "betterment principle" in 1890, that did not prevent the Council from returning to the attack repeatedly until in 1895 some parliamentary recognition was obtained.¹ On tramways, again, the attempt of the London Tramways Company to promote the Bill of 1891, which would have given them power to take their lines across Westminster Bridge and along the Thames Embankment, became the occasion of what Conservatives considered a veritable display of improper "Socialist" bargaining by the Council. To win "progressive" consent, the Company was asked to reduce employees' hours, to agree to workmen's tickets at not more than $\frac{1}{2}d.$ per mile and to accept the possibility of purchase by the Council on terms that hardly seemed to make due allowance, on Stock Exchange lines, for the commercial risks the Company proposed to take.²

Still other controversies should be mentioned if any adequate idea is to be given of the bitterness of the County Council elections of March 1892 and of the Parliamentary elections that followed a few months afterwards and converted the metropolis once again into the country's principal debating arena between "Socialism" and its opponents. The "progressives" were charged with angling for votes by offering the plunder of "property" on the largest scale. And if the vote of the very poor was aimed at by advancing a claim to the City's Guild and Charity property,³ the small shop-keeper's coyer vote, it was alleged, was made the mark of even more Machiavellian calculations. Regardless of the fact that an occupier's responsibility for rates automatically reduced the rent

¹ Cf. A. G. Gardiner, *John Benn and the Progressive Movement*, p. 106. It may be assumed that "property" was not altogether without a case since Benn's biographer admits that the Council eventually dropped the "betterment" rate for something less controversial. Actually the Council acquired property in the bulk of the area to be improved and let it out on "profitable leases".

² *Ibid.*, p. 126: "The conditions were that at any time within twelve months the Council might, on payment of the costs of obtaining the Act, acquire the rights obtained by the Company under that Act, and if at any time the Council should exercise its right of purchase the price should not be increased by the increased value arising from the extension."

³ Cf. Sidney Webb, *The London Programme*, pp. 101-11, for an estimate of Guild income as amounting to over £800,000 per annum with another £100,000 per annum to add as the annual value of their Halls, plate, etc.

that could be asked of him, the shopkeeper (and ratepayer generally) was to be offered the transfer of part of his rate-responsibility to the landlord on the allegation that landlords had hitherto made no contribution to rates at all.¹ Further "relief" to the ratepayer was claimed in the shape of a municipal death duty and special "betterment" dues to be levied on the beneficiaries of Council "improvements".² Nor was this all. The owners of empty houses and vacant building sites were to be rated, almost on the assumption that such houses and sites could only be untenanted because of the grasping terms demanded by their proprietors. And, in some eyes, the most insidious "progressive bribe" of all was the call for the "equalisation of rates" throughout the metropolis. London's more prosperous districts, already contributing largely in aid of their poorer neighbours through the Metropolitan Common Poor Fund, were, it was alleged, threatened not merely with unjust new impositions but with impositions certain to increase corruption and extravagance among the most suspect of the Vestries and Boards of Guardians. Hitherto these dubious bodies had only had the rates of their own locality to play with but, in future, they would apparently be blessed by the ability to put their hand into the pockets of all London. That even Sidney Webb should have been willing to offer checks on what he charitably called "local extravagance" seems to afford clear proof that "moderates" had some cause to fear the effects of "equalisation of the rates", pure and undiluted.³

Despite the conspicuous efforts made to procure a strong "moderate" rally against the increasingly "progressive" tendencies of the Council, the elections of March 1892 produced a Council of 84 Progressives and 50 Moderates. And, as one chronicler, records:⁴

Even these figures hardly represented the magnitude of the triumph, the majorities generally being unusually large. Thus Mr. John Burns had a majority of 3,000, and Mr. Sidney Webb, against whom the big

¹ In J. W. Benn's election address in East Finsbury the elector was offered "Continued insistence that Parliament shall transfer to landlords and all owners of rental and ground values in London a large share of the taxation which now unjustly falls upon shopkeepers, occupiers and toilers."

² Cf. Sidney Webb, *The London Programme*, pp. 166-70. Webb was elected L.C.C. member for Deptford.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 28: "It is not, however, desirable to throw all the expenditure . . . into one common fund, and levy an equal rate all over London. Such an arrangement would, it may be feared, tend seriously to local extravagance. . . ."

⁴ Cf. A. G. Gardiner, *John Benn and the Progressive Movement*, pp. 153-4.

guns had been turned, a majority of 1,700. The rout of the landlords was complete. . . . The party were jubilant. The *Daily Chronicle*, which, with the *Star*, had been their most constant and enlightened friend in the press, demanded, on the strength of the victory, Home Rule for London and the redistribution of the burdens of local taxation. Mr. John Burns was optimistic enough to think that they could carry their policy for the control of the trams, the water and the police, within the next three years.

In view of the General Election expected later in the year, the victorious Progressives of the L.C.C. went on to attempt to commit the bulk of Gladstonian candidates all over the country to their ambitious "London Programme". They certainly made it inevitable that the Gladstonian Government, which took office in August 1892, should stand committed to regard "London Unification" with a favourable eye. A Royal Commission on the subject was, in fact, conceded early in 1893, and the "London Programme" was thus guaranteed a thorough examination despite far-reaching demands which have been summarised as follows:¹

Extension of the powers of the Council so that all privileges possessed by provincial municipal authorities should be enjoyed by London..

The fusion of the City Corporation with the London County Council.

The transfer to the Council of the power of the Metropolitan Asylums Board and the control of the Metropolitan Police.

The setting up of district councils in place of the vestries.

That all municipal elections should be held on the same day, and that the areas should be the same.

That the Council should own the markets, the gas and the water supply of London.

That assessment should be put in the hands of the Council, and that there should be a proper and equitable rating of land values.

The equalisation of duties on land and personalty, and the application of part of the duties to municipal ends.

Public bodies to have the right to acquire open spaces for the public benefit.

Equal rights for men and women in municipal government.

The carrying out of the recommendations of the Royal Commission with regard to the City Guilds and charities.

It is too long a story to recount how the bright "progressive" hopes of 1892 and 1893 were increasingly overcast when it became plain that the City meant to throw its whole prestige and resources against the Council's proposals and that it could rely upon strenuous

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, February 21, 1893, for H. H. Fowler, President of the Local Government Board, promising the Commission. The summary of the "London Programme" is from Gardiner's *John Benn and the Progressive Movement*, p. 155.

support from the Conservative party and the Lords. Long before the shattering Gladstonian Election defeats of 1895, indeed, it had become clear that the weak Liberal Cabinet of 1892-5 would be completely unable to carry any legislation for its "progressive" protégés, and that the Lords would be able to slay without ceremony any shreds of a "London Unification" Bill that persistence and good fortune might steer through the Commons. Yet there seemed, at first, to be some compensation in the Local Government Act of 1894 which "democratised" the London Vestries and Boards of Guardians in common with those of the rest of the country. The Lords had, indeed, viewed with no friendly eye the proposal to abolish the rating qualifications which had hitherto kept those who were not "substantial ratepayers" out of the London Vestries and Boards of Guardians.¹ The Peers even ventured to cut out of the Bill all that would have made it of service to London's "democracy" and only gave way when a formidable demonstration proved that, if they were not careful, they might endanger excellent Conservative prospects of a speedy return to power. Certainly, the Parliamentary elections of 1895 would hardly have yielded the astonishing Conservative triumphs seen in the metropolis if the "people" had had a substantial grievance.

It may well be that some Peers, in giving way, hardly saw how "property" could be worse "plundered" by the humanitarian "extravagances" of "Labour" Guardians and Vestrymen than it had already been by the corruption of the small knots of tradesmen and contractors who, under the system of rating qualification, had so often secured control of the Vestries and the Boards of Guardians. Doubtless, the exploits of Will Crooks and George Lansbury, when they were enabled to take increasing charge of Poplar's Poor Relief, were destined most rudely to undeceive them.² But, for the time, the greater "democratic harmony" established between the "people" of London and their Boards and Vestries certainly served to weaken the "rightful claims" of the London County Council to take over the direction of all London administration. Indeed, the strengthened moral position

¹ Cf. F. W. Soutter, *Recollections of a Labour Pioneer*, p. 178, for the situation in Bermondsey. There the qualifications for Vestryman was £25 rateable value, for Guardian £35 rateable value, and 10,587 inhabitant occupiers out of a total of 12,804 were stated to be ineligible for office.

² Cf. George Haw's enthusiastic *Will Crooks*, pp. 113 et seq.: "Bumbledom was dethroned. The sick were nursed better. The inmates were clothed better. All, both old and young, were fed better. . . . And, then, for the benefit of the infirm

of the Vestries was, before long, to tempt Conservatives to the idea of conferring corporation status upon them and so end, it was hoped for ever, the "insane megalomania" which induced the "progressives" to aim at the complete control of London and its conversion into a vast "municipalised" Paradise at the ratepayers' expense. But that story should, perhaps, wait, and an account first be given of the two hotly contested sets of London elections fought in the winter of 1894-5, which reveal most clearly, to the unfamiliar modern eye, what were the municipal issues which aroused the greatest heat at the time. And as County Council elections have already had a little attention, the London School Board elections of November 1894 will be treated before those held, in March 1895, for the London County Council.

Despite the fine work done by "progressives" in the first fourteen years of the School Board's history, 1885 saw, with the Chairmanship of the Rev. J. R. Diggle, the rise of what "progressives" considered as "an intolerant clericalism". "Clericalism" was assisted to win a majority partly by complaints of the School Board's humanitarian "extravagances" at the expense of the ratepayers and partly by the system of the "cumulative vote" ruling at School Board elections. London's School Board was returned by eleven huge constituencies, allowed from four to seven members each, with the individual voter entitled to throw all his four, five, six, or seven votes for one favourite candidate, if he so desired.¹ "Clericalism" had certainly contrived to drill its mixed pack of Anglican, Catholic and "anti-extravagance" voters more ably in the tactics of the cumulative vote than would have been thought possible in 1870 when that system had been adopted. And having obtained control, "clericalism" proceeded, according to its opponents, to restrict Board-school expansion so that "voluntary schools" under religious management might hold their ground and then ventured upon the even more controversial activity of seeking to eliminate what it considered to be the "secularist"

old folk, Crooks persuaded the Guardians to substitute butter for margarine, and fresh meat for the cheap stale stuff. . . . He even risked his reputation by allowing the aged women to put sugar in the tea themselves and the old men to smoke an occasional pipe of tobacco." Haw, of course, passed over as negligible the opposition of the Municipal Alliance to the rapid rise of rates and the prompt decline in "self-reliance" which accompanied the Crooks régime.

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1896, p. 338. The constituencies and the members allowed them were: City of London, 4; Chelsea, 5; Finsbury, 6; Greenwich, 4; Hackney, 5; Lambeth (East), 4; Lambeth (West), 5; Marylebone, 7; Southwark, 4; Tower Hamlets, 5; Westminster, 5.

blight which lay upon the Board Schools. The high point of "Diggleite clericalism" was reached with the notorious Circular of 1894 in which it was attempted to lay down more precise directions for Christian instruction so that the religion taught in 400 Board Schools by 8,000 teachers might be guarded from the covert secularism, agnosticism or even atheism which was suspected in part of the teaching body. The fact that the Anglican Archdeacon of London deplored the Circular, that 3,100 teachers asked to be excused from religious teaching under its definitions and that Nonconformists and Radicals built up a strenuous alliance against the "Anglo-Catholic plot", seems to give prima facie evidence of the Circular's unwisdom. The School Board election results of November 22, 1894, which made Mr. Diggle's continued Chairmanship impossible and destroyed all prospect of enforcing the Circular, provide similar evidence.¹ But here it must be a question not so much of electoral details as of the spirit in which a Radical-Nonconformist-Labour alliance fought the election under the Progressives' School Board Election Council. Here is a revealing quotation from an article on the election by the Radical Nonconformist, Dr. Clifford:²

The whole strength of Anglicanism, with a few notable exceptions, and most of the forces of Roman Catholicism, were pitted against the Progressives. The Bishop of London . . . definitely bade the Churchmen of London vote for Mr. Diggle; and on the eve of the election the Archbishop of Canterbury gave the reactionaries his sanction. . . . Added to the special and ceaseless activities of the Anglican Church were those of the Primrose League—the Women's Christian Education League . . . the Voluntary Schools Defence Union. . . . And . . . there was the *Church Times*, strenuous, bitter, scornful, beyond its wont, asking for the "sinews of war", not from Londoners only, but from the country at large, and rousing the laggards with the shrill cry . . . "for God and the children"; since, to use its apt words, the "election concerns everyone in the country, for to London do hundreds of provincial Boards look for guidance on religious questions" . . . all the virulence of religious invective was brought to bear against the Progressives. They were the opponents of the "*Christian* candidates". They were "Infidels", "Secularists", "Unitarians", "men who were ready to betray their God". . . .

May we then conclude that the strife is ended, and the reign of

¹ Cf. *The Review of the Churches*, January 1895, for articles on the election by the Archdeacon of London, Rev. J. R. Diggle, Dr. Clifford, the Nonconformist, Hon. Lyulph Stanley, the "progressive" leader on the Board, and Athelstan Riley, one of the Board's most combative High Churchmen.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 13-19.

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educational efficiency and educational peace at the doors? Most sincerely do I wish it may be so. I will not yet surrender the hope that we may cease from attempting to turn our State schools into theological academies, and nurseries for sectarianism, and be content to maintain them as the schools of the children of the people. But the omens are not favourable. The battle is only in suspense. . . .

To turn from the School Board Election of November 1894 to the County Council Election of March 1895 is to turn abruptly from the semi-theological sphere to that of controversy on "municipalisation", "unification", and "more equitable adjustment of the rates". The second County Council of 1892-5, though dominated by a great Progressive majority, had been very effectively prevented from realising any of its ambitious plans for materially enlarging its scope of action. The apathetic voter, who had been promised a new Jerusalem, found himself, instead, fatigued and irritated by reading of a constant stream of Council demands that always seemed to get rejected amid angry and confusing controversy. The Council had called loud and long for permission to absorb the City and its revenues, and the City, counter-attacking with bitterness had rendered the Council's plan completely abortive. Just as abortive had been the Council's activity in preparing Bills for the buying up of London's eight water companies; in demanding that the legislation authorising new metropolitan electric lines should contain a clause giving the Council the right of compulsory purchase after a specified period; and in agitating for strong representation on the Thames Conservancy. Even where the Progressives could rightly claim some "success", it tended to be dimmed by the clouds of controversy which hung about it. Thus the London scholarship scheme for devoting part of the beer and spirit duties of 1890 to the construction of an educational ladder from the Board School to the University was a very effective piece of work. Yet it had been accompanied by the usual abortive and controversial attempt to lay a questionable claim for part of the cost on those parts of the revenues of City Guilds not yet being devoted to purposes which the County Council thought beyond impeachment.¹ The

¹ Cf. *John Benn and the Progressive Movement*, pp. 171-3. The Guilds had already been forced by the "progressives" of the 1870's and 1880's to devote large parts of their "trust" income to education though they had insisted on doing so in their own way rather than in that of the "progressives". Now the County Council Progressives demanded for part-financing of their scholarship programme "a sum of not less than one-tenth of their corporate income as distinguished from their trust property".

“betterment rate”, again, though finally put into a Parliamentary enactment in the Tower Bridge (Southern Approach) Bill, was only grudgingly allowed to a body whose “progressive” majority was under constant criticism, whether for new bursts of “megalomania” like the demand to be allowed to operate a telephone service or for that alleged subservience to “Labour” which permitted trade unions to dictate “fancy” wages and conditions to County Council contractors and to the “Progressives” very suspect Works Department.¹

By March 1895, certainly, some of the fervid faith in London as the new Jerusalem must have evaporated for, in place of the 82 Progressives elected against 36 Moderates in 1892, 59 Progressives only were returned against an equal number of Moderates. This, of course, meant a Council in which majorities were unobtainable for the bolder flights of “municipalisation” and in which the Moderates were able to insist, in regard to the hotly disputed subject of London tramways, that there should be no direct Council operation. In the pose of forward-looking men themselves the Moderates claimed to be ready to allow the Council to take over ownership of the lines somewhat earlier than would have been the case under the various Tramways Acts. This would have, for one thing, the great practical advantage of allowing electrification to be considered, without long paralysing waits for Tramway Company rights to run out. But as “practical men” the Moderates wanted the “forward-looking” purchase of the lines from the Companies to be balanced by a business-like refusal to succumb to the temptations of Council operation. That would mean, according to them, every detail of tramwaymen’s hours, wages and working conditions becoming a subject of political contention inside the Council, while London’s other business was neglected

¹ Cf. *John Benn and the Progressive Movement*, pp. 157–62: “The intention, of course, was never to make the Works Department the sole employer of labour in connection with the Council’s undertakings. It was conceived as an instrument for resisting the predatory aims of the building interests and providing an alternative where it was clear that those interests were combining to reap unfair profits. The proposal was bitterly opposed by the Moderates, who regarded any direct trading operations by the Council as an unwarrantable interference with private enterprise. . . . It is not possible in the light of the total story of the Works Department to deny that all the fears expressed in regard to the fair wages clause were baseless. In the ultimate overthrow of this great experiment some measure at all events of the responsibility rests with the attitude of labour. It was not wholly free from the disposition to take that advantage of the public which in the case of the contractors had been the original motive behind the establishment of the Works Department.”

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and a constant condition of insubordination reigned on the London trams. The Moderates' own "practical" plan, which Progressives had largely to accept, was tramway operation of the Council's newly acquired lines by a syndicate of the former tramway companies, working under a fourteen-year lease, paying the Council rent and a proportion of any increased takings, and guaranteeing their employees conditions of labour, safeguarded in various directions.¹

London Progressives, however, faced their sternest test as Conservatism, completely triumphant in Parliament since 1895, prepared, during the winter of 1897-8, to help the Moderates to attain the victory in March 1898 that they had just failed to reach in March 1895. If a Moderate majority could be obtained, even one a good deal smaller, proportionately, than the astonishing six to one position established, with Liberal-Unionist help, at the Parliamentary elections in London, the Progressives' claims to a control of London so complete as to enable them, if they so desired, to dictate to the Imperial Government, might be firmly scotched by Parliament once and for all. From the Conservative point of view Lord Salisbury was almost too frank when he opened the attack on the Progressives in an address given to a conference of Conservative and Unionist Associations held at the Albert Hall on November 16, 1897. Here is one account of the Prime Minister's speech and its effects:²

He astonished even a sympathetic audience by the scornful character of his remarks about the Council and its works. There were statesmen, he said, who had fallen victims to megalomania, the passion for big things simply because they were big. While he revered the members of the London County Council for the amount of time which they bestowed fruitlessly on the public good, he thought we should have obtained more efficient machinery if we had been content to look upon London as what it was, *not one great municipality, but an aggregate of municipalities*. The question would not be solved unless they gave a large part of the duties at present performed by the London County Council to a number of smaller municipalities operating in narrower areas; and he had little doubt that some legislation on the subject

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1898, p. 340: "Thus a system extending over about fifty miles has become vested in the Council as representing the ratepayers, and, up to Midsummer, 1910, they will receive rents amounting to nearly £60,000 a year, together with 12½ per cent upon the increase in gross receipts over the year 1895. These rents will suffice to pay interest on the debt and a sinking fund on its redemption, and then leave a profit equal to nearly a farthing rate. . . ."

² *John Bann and the Progressive Movement*, pp. 249-52.

would be introduced by the Government in the ensuing session. At present they had a little parliament and that was not what they wanted. . . .

The speech showed an amazing ignorance of the body which it was apparently proposed to supersede by smaller municipalities. . . . No public authority of a local character had ever commanded such a wealth of character and ability. Bankers, civil servants, business men and a sprinkling of the abler and more energetic peers gave unstinted work to the Council. . . . But Lord Salisbury contended that limitation of size was necessary. . . . "Though I do not for a moment deny", he said, "that you have excellent men on the L.C.C., they are men of another kind. They are men who give themselves wholly up to this matter. That is not so good, or anything like so good, as the government of men who are still conducting their affairs in their own capacity . . . they are running into the danger of becoming professional politicians." . . . And he warned them against being governed as New York was governed.

The Progressives took up the challenge cheerfully. They realised that Salisbury, whose ignorance of London opinion and affairs was exceptional even in a Prime Minister, had delivered himself into their hands. Whatever might be the feeling in regard to unification, London would certainly not tolerate the reduction of the County Council to the level of a local vestry. The memories of the Metropolitan Board of Works were too recent and the pride of London in its new instrument of government too secure to admit of such a fantastic piece of reaction. . . .

It may well be that reaction against Salisbury's threat to what administrative unity London possessed was already visible in the results of the London School Board elections of November 25, 1897. Certainly, the figures, as published on November 27th, showed that a firm Progressive majority had once again been established despite the pitfalls of the cumulative vote and the panic produced in certain quarters by fear of the "perils" that would arise from the Progressives' "secularism" and "extravagance".¹

The School Board figures were undoubtedly a stimulus to thorough Progressive organisation for the Council elections, and distinguished candidates were sought out to fight even some of the more hopeless West End seats.² Before the end, Rosebery and

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1898, p. 369, which summarises the results thus: "29 Progressives; 20 Moderates; 2 Roman Catholics; 2 Independents; 1 Independent Moderate; 1 Labour."

² Cf. *Private Diaries of Sir Algernon West*, p. 346. West, a Privy Councillor and Gladstone's factotum during his last Prime Ministership, had this to say: "The early months of 1898 were taken up in a County Council election, which I had been persuaded to go in for by Lord Welby, backed by H. Asquith. This I did in conjunction with (Hon.) J. Wallop, both of us standing as "Progressives" for Marylebone—which, as we knew, was a hopeless contest. During the canvass and at nightly meetings we enjoyed ourselves immensely, and if we had been

Chamberlain had entered the fray from opposite sides, Rosebery criticising Chamberlain's apparent readiness to carve up London into sub-divisions, none larger than Birmingham, and Chamberlain appealing, against the swelling pride and poor performance of the County Council, to what might be achieved by enlisting the local pride and ability of London's Camberwells. The election results were, perhaps, more affected by the cry of "Cities of the rich and parishes of the poor" which the Progressives devised in order to voice their suspicion that the Conservatives were capable, if left unchecked, of raising Westminster and Kensington almost to the privileged municipal status of the City in order that these wealthy districts, too, might defeat the Progressive plan of greater metropolitan integration and more "equalisation of the rates". When the election results of March 1898 gave the Progressives 70 elected seats against 48 for the Moderates,¹ it became quite obvious that any Conservative plans of the sort had become inexecutable. The London Government Act, which the Conservatives took to the Statute Book in 1899, was certainly much less objectionable than the one Progressives had feared, or affected to fear, in 1898.

Yet the London Government Act had its Conservative strategy too. In municipalising London Vestry Government and conferring upon it the full panoply of Mayors, Aldermen, Town Clerks and the rest, the Conservative Cabinet of 1899 had gone far to make it certain that London's district governments would never consent to become mere locality agents for an all-powerful London County Council. The City had, in fact, been presented, in the twenty-eight newly created Metropolitan Boroughs, with invaluable allies against any "overweening pretensions" that the County Council Progressives might advance in the name of "the people of all London". Indeed, in proposing that the new Boroughs should go direct to the Local Government Board for loan-sanction instead of to the County Council as the Vestries had done, the Conservative Bill had, at first, threatened to deprive the Council of one of its principal controls over locality developments. It

younger and less experienced we should have been deluded into the belief that we were going to be successful, for our meetings were enthusiastically in our favour, and all sorts of people were on our side. . . . Our agent was very optimistic, and asked Wallop if it was true that he was heir-presumptive to an earldom, and his mind being relieved on that point he said: "That will have the best effect. . . ."

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1899, p. 364.

took a struggle on the part of the Progressives' Liberal friends in Parliament to secure the maintenance of the Council's existing rights over local government borrowing in the metropolis. But all the Progressives' Parliamentary friends could do failed to persuade Ministers to allow the County Council any new contacts with the capital's district governments. Thus, despite a "democratic" prejudice against admitting to the Council anyone not directly elected by the "people", the Progressives would gladly have invited representatives of the new Borough Councils to their deliberations and would, in fact, vastly have preferred such members to the Aldermen they were compelled to co-opt for six-year terms under the Local Government Act of 1888. But Conservatives rejected the idea out of hand. They saw in it the elements of an old Progressive plan to strengthen the Council's moral claim to speak in the name of the people of all London. And they feared, or affected to fear, that organic connection with the County Council would divert the new Boroughs from administration, which was their proper task, to the partisan politics which according to Conservatives, had vitiated the Council's every activity.¹

There was, of course, other trouble on the London Government Bill, the Progressives finding special reason for suspicion in the creation of a "greater Westminster" from London's richest areas, formerly under the separate Vestries of St. James's, Westminster, St. George's, Hanover Square and the Strand District Board. In view of Progressives' long history of trouble with the rich and privileged City of London, the appearance of a wealthy and extensive "City of Westminster" to lead the new Metropolitan Boroughs into the same jealous course of seeking Conservative protection from every attempted County Council "encroachment" was no attractive prospect. Another Progressive grievance was the setting up of a huge new Borough of Wandsworth, for in this aggregation of South-West London's most desirable residential areas, growing almost daily in housing, population and rateable value, there seemed certain to emerge another powerful municipal body with but the scantiest sympathy for or interest in London's grimmer

¹ Cf. *The Times*, February 24, 1899, quoting Balfour thus: "The real reason why I am unwilling to adopt this plan is that, in the first place, it would inevitably drag these councils into the political vortex in which the L.C.C. appears to flourish. . . . I think it would be a great pity to dedicate these new boroughs from their very birth to their political future. . . ."

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and grimmer side.¹ To instance the Lords' success in striking from the Bill a provision permitting women's membership of the new Metropolitan Borough Councils is to supply yet another reason for the complete lack of "progressive" enthusiasm for the London Government Bill.²

Whatever their disappointments with the London Government Bill, the large Progressive majority of 1898-1901 spent three busy years. Their principal housing achievement, the Bethnal Green Boundary Street estate, opened in March 1900,³ became even more internationally famous than the Blackwall Tunnel, under the Thames, opened in 1897. Meanwhile the great Kingsway street-construction project was being put into operation, and maximum utility was being sought from a newly planned Rotherhithe Tunnel by a carefully designed policy of clearing the road-approaches on both sides of the Thames. Moreover, having acquired eighteen miles of South London tramway, in 1898, by "voluntary agreement" with the business interests concerned, the Progressives had begun working the system themselves, putting the first tram with the legend "L.C.C. Tramways" on the road on New Year's Day, 1899. This proved but the beginning of a great tramway plan for the Metropolis, envisaging universal electrification, "shallow tunnels" under West End and City streets, and the use of virtually all the capital's bridges and embankments for tramway purposes. It must be assumed that the Conservative Parliamentary majority and the City, which had little love for the Progressives at the best of times, were hardly made more friendly to the plan by the "Socialism" which attended the first direct working of tramways by the County Council. To have raised tramway wages as a matter of policy and, at the same time, to have reduced hours,⁴ certainly promoted no prompt victory in Parliament for what was soon being

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, March 21 and March 23, 1899, for the speeches of Herbert Gladstone and Asquith. Gladstone's remarks on Westminster and Wandsworth and Asquith's on the whole of the Bill as a mere protection for the privileges and revenues of the City were the more noteworthy as coming from men with strong claims to relative "moderation". Westminster was to get the city status it claimed confirmed by charter in 1900.

² Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1900, p. 359, under June 26, 1899: "LORDS. By 182 votes to 68 expunged from the London Government Bill the clause inserted in the House of Commons qualifying women for election to the new councils."

³ Cf. *London County Council, Housing of the Working Classes, 1855-1912*.

⁴ *John Benn and the Progressive Movement*, p. 227. In fairness to the Progressives it should be said, that though their hours policy on the eighteen miles of their system, necessitated the engagement of four hundred extra men, they claimed only to be providing for a ten-hour day over a six-day week.

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melodramatically called "the Battle of the Bridges".¹ It was not, for example, until December 15, 1906, that tramways were running along the Thames Embankment,² and if Progressives hoped that the friendly Government and Parliament that they at last had, would help them to force the City to admit "shallow tunnels", and other authorities, from the Metropolitan Boroughs to the Middlesex County Council, to give up their objections to the full scope of Progressive tram-plans, they were to be rudely undeceived. On March 2, 1907, the electorate, grown tired of nine years of Progressive control, mercilessly and unscrupulously attacked by a lavishly financed propaganda, turned the Progressives out decisively.³ In future, the L.C.C. trams had only the lukewarm support of a Moderate Council, while "the advance of science" came to the aid of those authorities, inside or outside the London County area, who objected to extensions of the tramway system. The "tube" from Baker Street to Waterloo had been opened on March 10, 1906, and, even before, the first petrol-driven buses had appeared on the streets independent of the expensively electrified L.C.C. lines, whose laying or repair made endless traffic problems.

The "advance of science" was not, however, to be foreseen and, by 1907, Progressive persistence certainly seemed to have taken the "collectivisation of transport" very near to victory above ground. The County Council had, of course, been helped by old-style Tramway Acts drafted in the blissful days before the "Socialist peril" and blithely permitting compulsory municipal purchase after a term of years. It was this County Council advantage of legal position which had finally induced the Lords and the City to give up "the Battle of the Bridges" in 1905 and which, in 1906, procured an immense surrender of private tram-operating rights, years before the stipulated time. But the increasingly "menacing" scale of the "Socialist" victory in the matter of the trams was a "lesson" to Conservatives, who had already long resolved that no opening should be given to Progressives that would enable them to take charge of London's other public utilities.

It was in the matter of London's water supply that the agitation

¹ Cf. *Daily News*, *L.C.C. Election Leaflet*, No. 10 (February 1907) for an election song "Trams, Trams, Trams" for a refrain.

"Trams, Trams, Trams across the bridges!

Cheer up, comrades, they have come.

Peers and Mods. are put to rout, and the People gaily shout . . ."

² Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1908, p. 399.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 396.

for "public control" seemed loudest and most justifiable. The eight existing water-companies were hardly giving efficient or economical service, and, besides, London's water problem urgently needed re-envisaging as a whole if a really dangerous water-famine were to be avoided in no very distant future.¹ Matters were further complicated by the fact that Water Company Stock was over-valued because the Stock Exchange expected that the buying-out of the Companies would have to be the basis of any possible scheme of London Water Reform. And if, once already, Conservatives' over-tenderness for the "vested interest" in water had promoted their General Election rout of 1880,² the Progressives' tendency "unduly" to disparage the value of the Water Companies' assets probably cost them, in 1895, their one real chance to get water powers into their hands. When the Progressives, after suffering reverses at the County Council election of 1895 and heavier reverses still at the Parliamentary election a little later, declined to modify the Water Bills they had successfully taken to Second Reading in the "Radical Parliament" of 1892-5, they apparently lost fair chances of legislating "by agreement" with the City and the new Salisbury Government.

County Council Water Bills were subsequently rejected in 1897 and 1901, and in 1902 the Conservative Government proposed legislation of its own, ingeniously calculated to "dish the Progressives" as well as to "do justice" to the Water Companies, whose shares had, of course, risen as soon as the Bill was announced. Authority to buy up the Water Companies and to tap distant new sources of supply, though repeatedly refused to the Water Committees suggested by the Council, was offered to a new public body, the Metropolitan Water Board. And though the County Council forced changes upon a Government which had at first suggested

¹ Cf. *John Benn and the Progressive Movement*, p. 275: "Meanwhile the menace of water famine became more serious with each passing summer. There had been a shortage in 1896, a more serious shortage in 1897, and in 1898 the insufficiency of the supply approached the character of a famine. . . . The famine in the East End was aggravated by the insufficiency of taps. A speaker in the Council on September 15th illustrated the gravity of the position by reference to a court in Poplar . . . where some eighty-six people lived in ten rooms. They had but one water-tap between them, and during the famine that tap only worked for four hours of the twenty-four. Not only was the water insufficient, but it was dirty. . . ."

² Cf. *Local Government and Taxation in the United Kingdom* (ed. 1882), p. 238, for what had been the gravamen of the charge against the Conservative Water Trust Bill of 1880: "The price agreed to be paid under these agreements was nine millions in excess of the market value of the property at a period shortly anterior. . . ."

allowing it a mere 10 members in a Board of 69, even the revised schedule of Water Board membership was a bitter disappointment to Progressives who had once dreamed of a Water Committee, nominated seven-eighths by the Council and one-eighth by the City. In 1895 and 1896 nobody had dreamed of setting up claims for the discredited Vestries as more genuinely representative than the "County Council caucus", but that was precisely the virtue Conservatives claimed for the new Metropolitan Boroughs which they had created and to whose Councils they proposed to allot overwhelming weight in the Water Board. Even when the County Council was allowed 14 members on a Board of 66 and the representation of the Metropolitan Boroughs was reduced to one apiece, double membership for the City and Westminster, and the decision to seat representatives from all manner of other authorities in the Home Counties, yielded the final picture of a Board certain to be singularly unamenable to Progressive leadership.¹ Here is John Burns's bitter comment on Second Reading:²

He believed that the Board had been created not because the Government thought it was a workable Board, but because it was necessary to have a large Board in which the County Council would be outvoted. . . . It was intended by the Bill to shear still further the County Council of its proper duties. They were not to have the power to run a half-penny tramway over Westminster Bridge (Ministerial cheers), while those on the other side spent millions on a railway in Uganda to enable the natives to burn the sleepers (Laughter). They must not run steamboats. They had been deprived of the telephones, robbed of the markets and last, but not least, they were to be considered unfit to discharge the elementary duty of carrying out a municipal water supply. He complained that the County Council would be inadequately represented on the Water Board and suggested that the County Council had been placed in a hopeless minority in order that the water companies might

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1906, p. 362, for the form ultimately assumed by the Water Board with one member each allowed to the Kent, Essex, Surrey, Middlesex and Hertfordshire County Councils, one member apiece to the Thames and Lea Conservancies and a large batch of members to the Borough Councils and Urban Districts of Kent, Essex, Surrey and Middlesex. There was some justification for allowing representation to areas whose water interests were already affected by London demand or who were certain, in the near future, to find it advantageous to be able to draw upon the relatively distant sources the Progressives had proposed to tap. But there was doubtless something in the Progressive charge that there was much political *arrière-pensée* in the sudden Conservative zeal for allegedly impartial, all-round water representation.

² Cf. *The Times*, March 4, 1902. Burns had been a leading Progressive from the opening of the Council in 1889. He strenuously assisted the Liberal Front Bench's efforts, efforts against which the Closure had to be carried by 223-145 and an amendment defeated by 226-140.

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exploit inexperienced borough councillors in regard to the terms of purchase. He declined to recognise that the borough councils ought to be considered in this matter. They were elected for microscopic local purposes, and their representatives on the Water Board would fight for cheap water for their own districts at the expense of other districts. This large Water Board was unworkable and dangerous, and an experienced County Council Committee ought to be substituted for it. . . .

Though the Conservatives had refused the County Council water powers in 1902, they decided, it was complained, to "thrust" very large education powers upon them in 1903. County Council Progressives, who had, in the main, joined heartily in the Opposition's campaign against the Education Act of 1902, and the slaughter of famous School Boards under it, showed not the slightest relish at being offered the succession of the most famous School Board of all, that of London. They did not, indeed, undertake the same policy of non-co-operation and obstruction as was practised in Wales,¹ though, before long, they saw reason for complaining bitterly that the Conservative gift of education had been a poisoned one. So many of the "voluntary schools" which had come, with the board schools, under Council jurisdiction needed extensive improvement or complete replacement that considerably higher rates became inevitable.² And this increase

¹ Cf. *John Benn and the Progressive Movement*, p. 320, quoting Benn in the House (April 18, 1905): "He said that the action of the London County Council in loyally assisting the Government to carry out their education scheme in London, had been criticised and objected to by many members of the Opposition. . . . The County Council were recommended . . . to follow the example of another part of the kingdom by putting every impediment in the way of the operation of an Act which they regarded as objectionable. They took the line that it was their duty . . . to sacrifice their principles for the moment in order that the children of London might not suffer. . . ."

² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 321, quoting Benn in the House on April 18, 1905: "He wished to call attention to the seriousness of the report just issued with regard to non-provided schools. This report had staggered London . . . the London County Council had secured the services of those officers who in the past had been associated with the School Board, and they had employed an architect of great experience. That architect, having surveyed the 438 non-provided schools, was only able to report satisfactorily with regard to 64. . . . They were also told that 92 of these schools must be closed at once, and 26 departments of other schools. . . . In all, 229 departments were unsuitable. . . . Referring to the drains, he said that 78 per cent had been reported to be unsatisfactory. The Education Act was dumped down at the door of the London County Council. They had never asked for those duties. The result was that they must find 70,000 new school places, which meant an expenditure of £224,000 a year. . . . The Minister, he thought, must certainly have known what kind of burden was going to be placed on London by the Bill. The report estimated that London must find £523,000 a year for the non-provided schools. He thought it was the duty of the Government to come to the help of the Council and the ratepayers of London."

of rates furnished Conservative and "Moderate" propaganda, already gleefully stressing the Progressives' "insane" expenditures upon "municipalised" trams and steamboats, with exactly the right material for attack.¹ Even when the County Council attempted a tram economy by importing Belgian rails rather than pay the exorbitant price a British "iron ring" was alleged to be extorting, this, too, became matter for offence since it was "putting British workmen on the street". The first evidence of the approaching Progressive collapse came on November 1, 1906, when, at the elections for the Metropolitan Borough Councils, the blame for "high rates" was so successfully put upon County Council Progressives and their Borough Council understudies that there was a striking "Moderate" victory.² In the interval before the County Council elections of March 2, 1907, there came, among other Progressive misfortunes, much disquieting evidence of municipal corruption from the "Socialist" borough of West Ham.³ A Progressive defeat became certain, the more so as considerable clerical and religious activity formerly reserved for School Board Elections was now, since the County Council had become the education authority, thrown into the scale upon the "Moderate" side. It was thrown, too, with considerable vehemence, owing to the "religious" excitement aroused against the Education Bill propounded, in 1906, by the Progressives' allies on the Liberal Front Bench.⁴ And when the Progressives' defeat came on March 2, 1907, it was both on a large scale and final. The combination of anti-wastrelism, "Municipal Reform", and "religion", written up by some of the most screaming pens in the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* offices,⁵ kept its hold on London government until 1934.

¹ Cf. *PROGRESSIVE-SOCIALIST WASTRELS and the debt they have hung round your neck* (London Municipal Reform Leaflet No. B.551 for the intensity finally reached by this propaganda. It will be noticed that the "Moderates" were adopting the new and attractive title of Municipal Reformers.

² Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1908, p. 395, under November 1, 1906: "The London Borough Council elections resulted in a striking victory for the Moderate (Municipal Reform) Party."

³ *Ibid.*: "Seven guardians and officials of West Ham were arrested in connection with coal contracts."

⁴ Cf. *John Benn and the Progressive Movement*, pp. 344-7, for the worst feature of the "religious" position from the point of view of the Progressives. Many Dissenters and friends of the old School Board were discontented that the County Council should have co-operated in working the Education Act of 1902.

⁵ The style both of the Municipal Reform Leaflets and those of the Conservative Publication Department reached, in the winter of 1906-7, a pitch of inflammatory violence and unscrupulousness rarely equalled on that side of politics before.

CHAPTER XXVI

RELIGION

"It is impossible, I believe, to exaggerate the perils of our position. . . . We are on the edge of a precipice. Mr. Gladstone, or any other Prime Minister, has only got to move a string of resolutions in Parliament, proposing that the English Establishment shall be dealt with in the same manner that the Irish Establishment was dealt with, and I firmly believe that his proposal would be largely supported. The Romanists, the Infidels, the extreme Dissenters, the masses in our large towns, the farmers and labourers in many rural parishes would give him every possible help. The extreme Ritualists, who long for the separation of Church and State, would offer no resistance. Whether the Church of England can hold her own and repulse the attack of such a formidable combination is a very serious question. I believe she can, if Churchmen will awake, and open their eyes, and do their duty. But, at all events, the state of things demands the attention of every thinking Churchman."

The *Liberator*, February 1886, quoting Dr. Ryle, Bishop of Liverpool.

"The old religion, with its affirmations and denials, of Protestant and of Puritan England—the civilisation definitely dependent upon that particular outlook on the world—is to-day visibly dissolving. Within a generation its dominant doctrines have been quietly cast aside. Predestination and Calvinism, in their unflinching forms, have practically gone. Even in Scotland . . . they are repudiated by the main stream of the Presbyterian tradition. . . . And the new Calvinism of the natural sciences, with its blind forces and destinies, more inexorable and terrible even than the ancient conception of an inflexible directing Will, has not yet entered into the scheme of any of the popular religions. Gone, also, is that doctrine of Everlasting Punishment in a lake of material fire. . . . And going or gone, also, before the labours of a persistent critical method, is that belief in a literal and verbal inspiration of the books of the Hebrew Scriptures. . . . With these recognised changes within the fold have gone larger changes amongst those outside. . . . The repudiation of the fear of Hell has meant the fading of any conception of retribution for the sins done in the flesh—the future apprehended as an unending sleep, or the asphodel and lilies of a good-tempered God. . . . To-day the older austerity is deliquescing into an increasing, if still

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half-timid, determination to throw off the ancient restraints . . . the English Sunday of silence and spiritual exercises; the whole-hearted condemnation of the theatre, dancing, card-playing, all literature and art unsteeped in reticence; the hatred of the public-house, of betting and gambling; the branding of the supreme viciousness of any violation of the monogamic order of society . . . all this belongs to a vanishing England. . . .”

C. F. G. MASTERMAN'S *In Peril of Change* (1905), pp. 323–6.

WHEN the new electorate of 1885 went to the polls late that year, Disestablishment, English, Welsh and Scottish, was undoubtedly very much in question. It was often associated with "Free Education" and sometimes even with low-rent allotments. Virtually all "advanced Liberals" assumed that a great deal of Disendowment would go with Disestablishment and argued that the most "charitable" as well as the least controversial use that could be made of the tithe and other incomes which the "nation" would be "reclaiming" was the freeing of the elementary education of the poor from the necessity for "school pence". Low-rent allotments, too, were, on occasion, optimistically forecast when the "nation" should have "reclaimed" the clergyman's glebe for more urgent uses by the landless agricultural labourer. Here is one Conservative election address—that of Mr. Abel Smith who became M.P. for the Hertford Division—which made opposition to Disestablishment its leading topic:¹

My political opinions are well known to you from my votes in Parliament since 1854. . . . Many important questions are now before the country, but none more so than the question of Church Establishment. Believing as I do, that the maintenance of our national religion in this country depends on the existence of an Established Church, which is a bulwark against superstition on one side, and scepticism on the other—that the union of Church and State is of the utmost advantage to the State—that for the labouring classes especially the free ministrations of religion are an inestimable boon—that in the clergyman of every parish in the land they have a friend in time of need; I shall oppose to the utmost of my power every attack on the Established Church, whether in England, Scotland or Wales. As to the question of Disendowment, the proposal to deprive the Church of those endowments which have been given for religious purposes by the piety of our ancestors, and of men in the present generation, and to alienate those funds for other purposes, as suggested by Mr. Chamberlain and his followers, would, in my opinion, be robbery pure and simple. I think that even Liberal electors will hesitate to vote for a candidate who supports a measure so destructive to the cause of religion. . . . And I venture to think that such a measure is not desired by the great body of Nonconformists in the country whose endowments, they well know, must also share the same fate.

It is useful to set over against this forthright Conservative manifesto an interesting Liberal address, more moderate on

¹ W. S. Crawshay and F. W. Read, *The Politics of the Commons, Compiled from the Election Addresses, Speeches, etc., of the Present Members*, p. 148.

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Disestablishment than many others on the same side, but yet bringing into question some leading Anglican practices and demanding their reform. Here is what Mr. F. S. Stevenson, Liberal M.P. for the Eye Division of Suffolk from 1885 to 1906, had to say on religious matters in answer to a correspondent who had sought his views on Disestablishment:¹

I should not on any account record my vote in favour of a scheme that is in any way unfair or unreasonable . . . you ask whether, in case the Liberal party should bring the question forward for settlement, I should be prepared to support their action. To this I give an affirmative answer, as I look upon the eventual recognition of the principle of religious equality as inevitable. Besides, I think it desirable in the interest of the Church itself. For instance, the following reforms, which I regard as vital, are hopeless under existing conditions, viz.: 1. That every parish should possess the power of vetoing the nomination of an incumbent by the patron. 2. That the parishioners should also have the power of removing incumbents who, from immorality or other sufficient cause, have become incapable of properly discharging the duties of their office, by the verdict of a jury composed in equal numbers of lay inhabitants . . . and of clergymen from neighbouring parishes. 3. That a stop should be put to the sale of the cure of souls; and 4. That the Bishops should be removed from the House of Lords. But, however, there is not the slightest prospect of the question of Disestablishment being dealt with in the next parliament . . . and until the newly enfranchised—especially the agricultural labourers, who are more concerned in the matter than any other class in the community—have had sufficient opportunity afforded them for discussing . . . it would be premature to attempt legislation. . . .

Mr. Stevenson, who described himself as a "Liberal Churchman", was obviously a less enthusiastic "Disestablishmentarian" than many others sitting on his side of the House in 1886. Here is a report of what Mr. Richard Davies, later elected M.P. for Anglesey, had to say on Disestablishment in general and Welsh Disestablishment in particular:²

Referring to the question of the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church in Wales, Mr. Davies said that, as Nonconformists, Welshmen must approve of the universal application of those principles of religious equality and of the freedom of religion from State control, which underlie the question of Disestablishment. It could not but seem to them unreasonable in this age of free thought that an attempt should still be made to keep up an appearance of religious unity by an Act of Parliament. The Episcopal Church, even in England, is only one

¹ *The Politics of the Commons*, p. 238. ² *Ibid.*, pp. 51-2.

out of many branches of the Christian Church, and her union with the secular power of the State is a patent injustice to all the other branches. . . . But much more can be said of the injustice of the Church Establishment in Wales, which has long ago become a country of Nonconformists. It is long ago now since Welshmen were driven, by the indifference and apathy of the Established Church, to turn elsewhere for the spiritual help and sustenance which it is the express duty of God's Church on earth to supply. By immense efforts, by much personal sacrifice and devotion they have by this time succeeded, under God's blessing, in filling their land with flourishing institutions and places of worship. The position, therefore, of the Established Church, as such, in Wales, has become as great an injustice as ever it was in Ireland.

And in regard to Scottish Disestablishment, a passage may be quoted from the election address of the far from "extreme" Mr. Cameron Corbett, who, if elected for the Tradeston Division of Glasgow in 1885 to support Mr. Gladstone, was, in 1886, re-elected as a Liberal-Unionist to oppose him.

"I am in favour," said Mr. Corbett,¹ "of the disestablishment and disendowment of the National Churches, believing in religious equality as the only perfectly fair principle. Cherishing, as I do, the hope that disestablishment may be followed by the union of the Presbyterian Churches, I am especially desirous that the measure by which it is realised should be neither unjust nor ungenerous in its provisions. The endowments thus liberated might with great advantage be devoted to securing Free Education."

Even Ireland, primarily concerned though it was for Home Rule and the Land, found much denominational material in its election addresses. In view of the unwavering Catholic demand for a break-up of the "national system of education" in Ireland, Conservative candidates normally called loudly for its retention,² mutilated though it had been by a long series of surrenders to the Catholic claim for denominational schools under priestly control.

¹ W. S. Crawshay and F. W. Read, *The Politics of the Commons*, p. 303.

² Cf. Captain James M'Calmont's *Election Address* in East Antrim: "The establishment of denominational education would prove injurious to Protestantism and loyalty in Ireland. I would strenuously oppose the attempt of any party to introduce such a system." Cf. also Colonel Thomas Waring's *Election Address* in North Down: "Believing, as I do, that the introduction of denominational education in any form would be fatal to the true interests of Protestantism, I would oppose it to the uttermost." The two Dublin University M.P.s had, of course, committed themselves to resist any alteration of the system of 1873 under which the University and Trinity College, having opened their "portals to every class and creed" meant to keep those institutions "under the dominion and government" of their own graduates.

“National schools” had already long sorted themselves out into nearly homogeneous Catholic or Protestant schools, attended almost exclusively by children from one community or the other, who were taught and managed accordingly.¹ Nevertheless Protestants still looked to the financial, inspection, and text-book powers of the National Board to save Ireland’s public elementary schools from the most dreaded effects of what the vulgar among them called “Rome rule”. Meanwhile Catholic candidates for constituencies where there was a Protestant vote of any consequence found it advisable to make no mention of the Catholic future designed for the schools and to avoid those Fenian hints of readiness for rebellion in which Parnell’s nominees could safely indulge in Kerry and Tipperary. Instead, Protestant farmers were invited to share in equal measure with Catholics the protection from “landlordism” which Home Rule Ireland would confer. Here is an extract from the eloquence employed by Mr. Timothy Healy to convince Protestant farmers in South Londonderry that he could save them from their landlords who, in many cases, were City of London authorities:²

I have been sent to fight an admittedly hard and arduous battle in this constituency, in order that when I am sent by you to the House of Commons I may convey from Westminster to the Guildhall, where the Aldermen and Common Councilmen are sitting, and to the banquetting chambers where they sip their turtle soup, that in future, if they want to clothe themselves in purple and fine linen, and to fare sumptuously every day, they must not do so at the expense of Derry farmers. My friends, the custom at the present time is this, on the part of our enemies, to represent our party as a party of sectarian bitterness . . . they hope, if they succeed in keeping divided the Protestant from the Presbyterian, the Presbyterian from the Catholic, and the Catholic from both, that thereby these three sets of classes would be kept in their power, and that they would one after the other be able to rob them in turn. . . . You may all have observed that this fight is being made on the part of the Tories a religious fight. They have nothing else to go on in addressing you but the 39 Articles. . . . But let me ask my Presbyterian

¹ Cf. M. J. F. McCarthy, *Priests and People in Ireland*, 1903, p. 552, for what the system became after further concessions: “Of 8,651 national schools in operation in 1899, 5,893 were under exclusively Roman Catholic teachers, and 5,726 are under priest-managers whose signature is necessary to the monthly pay-sheets of the teachers . . . and who can dismiss the teachers on a quarter’s notice, independently of the Board. . . . The Inspectors of National Schools are civil servants who owe their appointment to a competitive examination conducted by the Civil Service Commissioners . . . but they must be ‘nominated’ in order to be admitted to the examination. . . .”

² Speaking at Magherafelt on November 16, 1885.

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and Protestant friends if they had a Parliament sitting in Dublin, do they think it would be worthless Commissioners that would be sent from it to reduce the rents? Do you think if Mr. Parnell was appointed by her Majesty to be Prime Minister in an Irish Parliament, do you think for a moment it would be landlords and agents he would make Sub-Commissioners? . . .

Sufficient has already been said, perhaps, to illustrate the main details of the "religious" position as it affected politics in the United Kingdom of 1885. In regard to England, it is plain that Disestablishment, if it was to be carried against the most determined opposition, needed much more passionate advocacy than it was receiving from the average Liberal M.P. of 1885-6. And Disestablishment probably became completely inexecutable after Conservatives decided in 1891 to finance "Free Education" from the taxes rather than have Church revenues held up continuously as a "bait to the poor". Disestablishment, of course, continued for long to hold a place, though an ever-diminishing one, on the political agenda and, in the special case of Wales, was eventually carried to the Statute Book in 1914 after a very bitter and prolonged struggle. But even in the Welsh case the most formidable obstacles had to be overcome, and it is doubtful if Welsh Disestablishment would have been accepted even in 1914 but for the party truce made necessary by the outbreak of a dangerous World War.¹ And if Welsh Disestablishment was allowed to appear, at last, on the Statute Book, it was a Conservative condition that it should be accompanied by a Suspensory Bill under which involved financial bargaining was continued during the war and after. Welsh Disestablishment did not, in fact, become operative until March 31, 1920.

In the case of the Scottish Disestablishment demand, too, attentive examination of the election addresses and speeches of 1885 reveals that even when the demand was at its height, there were fatal hesitations among the "party of progress". The Gladstonian politicians were far from unanimous on the question,² and

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1915, p. 185: "The Bill finally received the Royal Assent under the Parliament Act (i.e. over the head of the House of Lords) on September 17th, its operation being put off under the Government's Suspensory Bill, after an ineffectual attempt by Lord St. Aldwyn to add to the latter measure amendments to postpone the date at which the Welsh Church Bill would come into operation to such a period after the end of the war as would allow the preliminary arrangements to be made under normal conditions."

² Cf. *Election Address* of R. B. Finlay, O.C. (who became M.P. for the Inverness District and who wrote): "It is not in my opinion desirable that the national

some who were for Disestablishment were only so because the minority "State Kirk" used its legal advantages to refuse "comprehension" on any terms that the Free Church and the United Presbyterians considered fair and reasonable. These three main Presbyterian bodies, with no dogmatic differences between them, sundered only by the casual chances of history, and strong enough, if united, to bear down all the rest of Scotland, agreed even in the view that a just and constitutional State Kirk was entitled to the complete advantages of establishment including teinds, payable by all whether members or non-members.¹ After the Free Church and the United Presbyterians had, in 1900, combined to form the United Free Church, pressure upon the State Church for a "fair settlement" naturally grew, especially from among the Presbyterian laity. It says much for the political strength given by establishment and the unwavering Conservative support, always available for it, that the Church of Scotland was able to delay a "final settlement" until 1929.²

Among other "religious" subjects, submitted to the electorate by the candidates of 1885, was the Parliamentary Oath. Apparently it was only a minority even of the "progressives" who ventured, despite the continuous Bradlaugh troubles of 1880-5, to arouse dangerous clerical suspicions by announcing, however indirectly,³

recognition of religion in Scotland should cease, and that the religious patrimony of the Scottish people should be applied to secular purposes. I desire that the Church of Scotland should be maintained, but with such reconstruction as will remove all barriers which at present prevent those who hold the principles embodied in the Claim of Right from sharing in the benefits of an Established Church, and thus render the endowments of more extensive application . . . particularly in the Highlands. I recognise the fact that the incidence of the ecclesiastical assessment for the maintenance of churches and manses occasions hardship, especially to the smaller feuars in or near towns, and if returned to Parliament I will endeavour to have this hardship at once removed by legislation."

¹ *Election Address*. It will be seen from the last sentence quoted from Mr. Finlay that in Scotland more than the equivalent of Church rates was still collected despite the Church rate surrender in England in 1868.

² Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1931, p. 307.

³ Cf., however, the *Election Addresses* of Sir W. Crossman and Mr. P. Vanderbyl who were elected for Portsmouth, despite their comparatively open support for affirmation. Crossman declared: "I would vote for an Affirmation Bill, as I believe that no man's religious views, whatever they may be, should debar him from serving the State in any capacity." Vanderbyl's words were: "I am in favour of Affirmation, because I believe that many persons go through the ceremony of taking the oath without attaching any importance to the solemn nature of the act." It is, perhaps, worth noting that whereas Crossman secured re-election in 1886 as a Liberal-Unionist, Vanderbyl failed as a Liberal. The same fate overtook Hibbert, who despite official rank, a Privy Councillorship and his election of 1885 as Oldham's senior member, seems not to have pleased sundry "religious" elements by his open advocacy of the repeal of the Blasphemy

that they meant to support the "atheist Bradlaugh's claim" to affirm his allegiance instead of swearing it by oath. Bradlaugh, in fact, thought himself lucky to be allowed to swear allegiance in January 1886 for, even in the new Parliament, Conservatives and the Catholic Nationalists of Ireland outnumbered those supporters of "progress" who were prepared to become marked men, subjected by the "unco guid" to all manner of trouble for having "identified" themselves with a professed atheist. It was, indeed, not to the House itself but to the firm action of Speaker Peel in accepting Bradlaugh's oath (against the spirit of repeated resolutions in the Parliament of 1880-5) that the member for Northampton owed his long-delayed seat.¹ And once in Parliament, Bradlaugh devoted his uncommon energy to winning for agnostic or atheist M.P.s an Affirmation Bill giving them the right to affirm their allegiance instead of invoking the name of a God in whom they did not believe and the use of whose name for such a purpose was admittedly a species of profanation so "repulsive" that it had been made the excuse for refusing Bradlaugh his seat. The Conservative Government which, when in opposition, had found Bradlaugh's "atheism" so useful a weapon, had, when in office, to take a more responsible view, so that during the Affirmation Bill proceedings of 1888 a large part of the Conservative party normally held aloof and left opposition to its "religious" rump.² It illustrates however, the immense obstacles to Radical legislation to note that even in such favourable circumstances a very pretty quarrel developed among the partisans of "progress". Many agnostic Radicals who, like Morley, had repeatedly taken the Parliamentary Oath without qualm or protest as a relic of ancient superstition, chose to hold that the final version of Bradlaugh's Bill was not the reform that was required but, rather, in some cases, a change for the worse. To get this Second Reading through without a Conservative

Laws, laws that had recently been put into force against G. W. Foote of the *Freethinker*, sentenced to a year's imprisonment in March 1883 for having issued as a Christmas Supplement an illustrated *Comic Life of Christ*.

¹ Cf. *Anecdotal History of the British Parliament* (G. H. Jennings, 3rd ed., 1892), pp. 589-97.

² Cf. *Hansard*, March 14, 1888. After a strategic diversion had been attempted on Second Reading by an amendment suggesting a Royal Commission, obstruction was undertaken which was beaten even more decisively than the amendment. Then the Second Reading was carried by a majority of 250 against 150. It was a majority which astonished such seasoned Parliamentary journalists as H. W. Lucy who in *A Diary of the Salisbury Parliament, 1886-1892*, pp. 42-3, called it "a great triumph", "a great feat" and evidence of "the wholesale conversion of the Conservative party".

rally, Bradlaugh had promised to introduce an amendment, at a later stage, under which affirmation was not to be open to professing Christians who could plead no conscientious objection to the Oath. The "religious" ground for the demand, which Bradlaugh had accepted, was that if a believing Christian had the choice between an oath and an affirmation, he would invariably choose affirmation when he desired an obligation to sit more lightly on his conscience. According to the final version of Bradlaugh's Bill, therefore, those who asked for affirmation instead of oath virtually identified themselves—if they were not Friends—as "infidels" and would not receive the easy and safe liberation from the Oath which they had counted upon. Indeed, it is well known that for long afterwards the apprentice hand in Parliament and the agnostic litigant before the Courts was strongly warned from friendly quarters to leave affirmation alone as likely to arouse prejudice against him among the "religious".¹ The Radicals, who were furious with Bradlaugh in 1888, doubtless foresaw this, though their complaints against one who had gone through such ordeals as his came badly from those among them who, after Bradlaugh had won them the right to affirm, continued to find "excellent" reasons for doubting its expediency.²

It might be convenient at this stage to dispose of another "religious" question which had been hotly contested for nearly two generations between the Lord's Day Observance Society and the mixture of plebeian and professional-class Radicals whose views on the proper use of Sunday were voiced by the National Sunday League. The National Sunday League had long been demanding Sunday opening of national and municipal museums, libraries, and art-galleries on the ground that Sunday was the only day on which working men could enjoy their contents and that such enjoyment would provide an alternative to the Sunday public-house visiting permitted by the Legislature with much less justification. The average supporter of the Lord's Day Observance Society countered with more than the allegation that he was doing his best to secure

¹ Bradlaugh's Bill is known in Law as the Oaths Bill of 1888 and applied not merely to the Parliamentary Oath but to the Oaths of officials and Ministers and to those taken by witnesses before the Courts.

² Cf. Bonner and Robertson, *Charles Bradlaugh*, ii, 389-91, for a strong view of the subject: "It is a little too much to put on avowed Freethinkers, fighting for bare rights under all sorts of calumny and ostracism, the burden of securing an effortless immunity for those who all along stood at best in the rearguard, if they did anything in the matter at all."

Sunday public-house closing too, whatever might be the "Parliamentary interest" of the brewery shareholder or the working man who liked his "pint". There were often bitter charges that the call for Sunday museums and art-galleries was part of a deliberate attempt by "unbelievers" to defile Britain's Christian Sabbath and introduce the "meretricious levities of the Continental Sunday". "Labour," too, was solemnly warned against supporting a cry that might ultimately endanger its effortless receipt of Sunday as a day of rest.¹ And the assumed plight of museum-porters and art-gallery attendants, forced, perhaps, to work on Sundays against their wish and conscience, became the theme of much indignant rhetoric from those who conveniently forgot not merely the immense amount of Sunday labour needed to provide Monday's bread and newspapers but the even greater amount that had to go on in the nation's homes.

One of the Radical "extremists" in the Parliaments of 1885-95, who was most disliked by Conservatives, was C. A. V. Conybeare, M.P. for the Camborne Division of Cornwall. To examine the attitude he took on Sunday museum opening—an attitude thought by Lord's Day Observers to be both impudent and hypocritical—will be to clarify some of the reasons for heated feeling on the subject. During the election campaign of 1885 Conybeare, having been approached on the Sunday issue, wrote a letter which was thought worth quoting at length in one account of *The Politics of the Commons* issued before the election of 1886. The letter reeks of the "progressive" smugness of the day, and is worth quoting at some length.²

"I have not," wrote Mr. Conybeare, "supported the proposal to open museums on Sundays as a compulsory measure. I have from the first advocated it as a matter of Local Option . . . at this moment the law permits every city and town outside London to decide by a vote of its municipal authorities whether its local museum and library shall be open or not on a Sunday afternoon. Thus Liverpool decided but a few weeks ago that the art galleries of that city should be so opened. The opponents of such opening object on religious grounds. But what is on such grounds wrong in one place, must be equally wrong in another. If it be wrong to open the British Museum in London on Sunday

¹ Cf. *Election Address* of J. M. Maclean, who became Conservative M.P. for Oldham, for proof that this line of argument was not without effect. Maclean, a *rara avis* among his party, announced that personally he was in favour of opening museums, art galleries and libraries on Sundays, but accepted the (adverse) resolution passed by the Trades Union Congress as the opinion of working men "at the present moment".

² Cf. W. S. Crawshay and F. W. Read, *The Politics of the Commons*, pp. 102-3.

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afternoon, it cannot be right to open the art galleries of Liverpool. Therefore our opponents are bound to choose one of two courses . . . either give Londoners the right to decide for themselves how to spend their Sunday afternoons, or take away that right from other towns which now possess it. But, further, I have ever advocated the proposal in the interests of true religion. I have never heard anyone propose an Act to compel people to go to church or chapel. It is notorious that in our cities, especially London, hundreds and thousands never attend a place of worship. The only alternative to their miserable hovels is the streets or gin-palace. I, for one, am fully persuaded that to give these poorly housed and hard-worked toilers the opportunity of beholding, on a Sunday afternoon, a grand picture of the Virgin and her Child, or the Saviour on the Cross, or of reading some volume containing noble and elevating thoughts, is more likely to tempt them to enter the church or chapel, and learn to pray, than the most eloquent preaching. . . . The contemplation for half an hour on a Sabbath day of the Raphael cartoons in the South Kensington Museum . . . would be at least as likely to convert a heathen mind as a long sermon on the doctrine of the Trinity. . . .”

Yet this type of advocacy, with its pretensions at once to the most charitable “religion”, the most enlightened “progress” and the most perfect “liberty”, was capable of working wonders in Late Victorian England. What had always seemed beyond the reach of “Secularism”, when organised as a militant force by Bradlaugh, was conceded to the more unctuous Conybeare school in almost embarrassing measure. Municipally, the City of London, with its own reasons for affecting a “progressive attitude”, seemed to signal a retreat from the rigid Sabbatarianism hitherto maintained by the bulk of “historic corporations” when, on April 22, 1894, it began Sunday opening of the Guildhall Art Gallery.¹ Meanwhile the ground was being prepared for the Sabbatarian surrenders at the national galleries and museums which already seem to have been largely completed by the time *Whitaker's Almanack* for 1897 was being printed in 1896.²

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1895, p. 368: “The Guildhall Art Gallery open for the first time on Sunday: 2,369 visitors passed the turnstile.”

² *Ibid.*, 1896, still shows the British Museum, for example, as “entirely closed on Sundays”. *Whitaker's* for 1897, however, gives it as “open on Sunday afternoons” and gives South Kensington and Bethnal Green as open on Sundays “from 2 till dusk”. The National Portrait Gallery is given as open “on Sundays from 3 to 6, free, during the summer months” though at the National Gallery matters took somewhat longer to reach this stage. Nowadays, of course, the “Sunday question” has taken another turn, for the “workers” or their alleged representatives no longer seem to set much store by Library and Museum opening. Instead, cinema and screen interests claim to be voicing their real wishes when organising Sunday opening campaigns.

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Before turning to deal with the absorbing disputes on Ritualism and the "Higher Criticism" which played so prominent a part in the religious life of the late nineteenth century, it might be well to deal further with the list of troubles Churchmen were called upon to meet if the "Establishment" were to be saved. Many pages would be necessary to prove in any detail how delicately Conservatism had to tread in such property matters as tithe in order to prevent the customary alliance of Church, landowner and farmer from breaking up to the profit of Radicalism and Disestablishment. Thus, an Extraordinary Tithes Bill was allowed to pass to the Statute Book in the Gladstonian season of 1886 by which the Church surrendered all hope of winning more extraordinary tithe if fresh ground were brought under more intensive cultivation in the shape of hop-gardens, orchards, fruit plantations and market-gardens. Moreover, in order to meet the argument that the Church's right to extraordinary tithe on existing hop-gardens and orchards was an obstacle to further money being sunk in their development, the Church agreed to provisions under which an estimate was to be made of the capitalised value of existing extraordinary tithe and four per cent of this capitalised value was to become a permanent rent-charge whatever degree of crop-intensification might subsequently be practised.¹ As the landowners, in their turn, agreed to accept the cost of the estimation and yet Conservatives still found tenant-farmers discontented, the frequent Conservative predicament if a farmers' breakaway to Radicalism was to be prevented will be understood.² And something of the same manner of difficulty was constantly occurring on the main corn tithe. The Tithe Commutation Act of 1836 had arranged for tithe rent-charge to be fixed on the basis of septennial corn-price

¹ Cf. *Liberator*, August 1886, p. 137, for a full view of the Act. This Disestablishment paper which had been leading a campaign against Extraordinary Tithes for years naturally noted with pleasure that "this Act (49 & 50 Vict., ch. 54) states in the preamble that the extraordinary charge is an impediment to agriculture, and it is expedient that the same be limited, and power be given to redeem the same".

² Cf. *Ibid.*, February 1886, p. 23, for what had preceded the passage of the Extraordinary Tithes Act. Under the rubric SEIZING HOP-POLES FOR TITHES the *Liberator* reported: "The Rev. J. L. Cameron, Vicar of Shoreham, Kent, has seized 40,000 hop-poles belonging to Mr. May of Halswood, for Extraordinary Tithes. At the sale farmers and labourers came from all round to express their indignation. The auctioneer had to be imported from London, and he showed his view of the transaction by proposing a vote of thanks to Mr. May, and giving a guinea to the Anti-Extraordinary Tithe Association. It is stated that, in consequence of the tithe, hop-growing is being abandoned in the district, and the labourers will lose their employment."

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averages, but Conservatives had to withstand the heaviest farmer-pressure for a revision to triennial averages when, during the later 1880's, the Act seemed to hinder the tithe demand from falling as quickly as the disastrous corn-prices of the day.¹ And the text has already dealt with the avalanche of Radical criticism that fell on Conservative heads when in 1899, in pursuance of the policy of giving some rate-relief from the Exchequer to rural incomes suffering more than ever from the collapse of agricultural prices, the Tithe Rent Charge (Rates) Act gave the parson his bitterly denounced "dole".

A Church concession, almost as significant as the Extraordinary Tithes Bill and made in the same Gladstonian season of 1886, reveals another aspect of the Church's anxieties. The Church of England had inherited from Rome much of its canonical law of marriage, and Dissenting Liberationists had for some time marked out the Church's "canonical hours" for celebrating marriage as often causing unnecessary hardship to the poor for no other reason than an ecclesiastical tradition without binding effect on Protestants.² When, indeed, the 1885 elections allowed the Liberation Society's secretary, Mr. Carvell Williams, into Parliament, one of the first tasks to which he set his hand was a Marriage Hours Extension Bill under which he proposed to make it possible for parishioners to ask incumbents to celebrate marriages at any time between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., instead of being confined to the hours between 8 a.m. and noon. As there was a "poor man's case" against canonical hours that almost necessarily involved the often unwelcome loss of a whole day's work and pay, the Gladstonian Government of 1886 apparently mediated an understanding with the Church authorities under which Carvell Williams agreed to confine marriage hours to the period between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m., and was assured, in return, of an almost certain passage.³ More than that, after the Bill had duly been placed upon the Statute Book, High Church mutinies seem to have been discreetly stifled by the Church authorities themselves.⁴

¹ Cf. *National Church*, April 1888, p. 114, and May 1888, p. 153.

² By Liberationists is, of course, meant members or supporters of that famous Disestablishment body, the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State-Patronage and Control. It had its own important monthly, the *Liberator*.

³ Cf. *Liberator*, April 1, 1886, p. 55: "MARRIAGES (HOURS OF SOLEMNISATION). On March 19th, Mr. Carvell Williams moved the second reading. The Government offered to support the Bill if the hours were fixed at from eight to three, instead of eight to four. . . ."

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, July 1, 1886, pp. 111-12.

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It might have been well if the Church authorities could have brought themselves and their Parliamentary friends to the same measure of grudging consent on the Marriage (Deceased Wife's Sister) Bill. Here again a canonical injunction, inherited from Rome, seemed to put the Church into the position of offering an unjustifiable obstacle to "progress", a never-ending irritant to Dissenters, and a constant Disestablishment argument to the Liberation Society. But a Marriage Law Defence Union had long been marshalling Churchmen in defence of the existing table of "prohibited degrees", and tense loyalties had been recruited, impervious to the prudential arguments which had had effect in what was regarded as the lesser question of canonical hours.¹ Despite really mordant criticism, the more dangerous because of widespread suspicion that Romanisers were at work, Church zealots went on procuring the Upper House defeat of Bill after Bill until the mighty Radical host of 1906 was too obviously powerful to be gainsaid. Even so, the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill taken to the Statute Book in 1907 was a grudging one, for it not only permitted clergymen to decline the solemnisation of such a union but left the legalisation of deceased brother's widow marriages to wait until 1921 and that of a whole string of other "prohibited" marriages until 1931.²

That there were other "Marriage Law" troubles for the Church may be instanced from Radical election proceedings at Oldham and Mid-Derbyshire in 1885. At Oldham, Hibbert announced himself ready to equalise the marriage-position of the chapel with that of the Church and to do away with the necessity for the registrar's presence at chapel.³ And that the Dissenting claim he was here adopting was caused by more than the mere desire to have chapels and their ministers put on a legal equality with churches and their

¹ Cf. *National Church*, May 1889, p. 131, for this Anglican paper's venturing to whip up opposition to a Scottish Deceased Wife's Sister Bill on the ground that "though the Bill proposes to deal only with Scotland, it involves the whole principle of our present marriage law, and its enactment would be fraught with the most serious consequences".

² The marriages in question were with deceased wife's brother's daughter, deceased wife's sister's daughter, father's deceased brother's widow, mother's deceased brother's widow, deceased wife's father's sister, deceased wife's mother's sister, brother's deceased son's widow and sister's deceased son's widow. It is worth noting that clerical feeling was still strong enough to insist as in 1907 and 1921, not only on no clergyman's being obliged to solemnise such marriages but on marriages in these "degrees of affinity" remaining forbidden where the opportunity to contract them had not come from decease but from divorce.

³ Cf. W. S. Crawshay and F. W. Read, *The Politics of the Commons*, p. 217.

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clergy is proved by one of the demands made in Mid-Derbyshire upon Mr. Jacoby, a characteristic Radical M.P. who was in Parliament throughout the years between 1885 and 1909. "Would Mr. Jacoby", it was asked, "favour the abolition of the law that compelled Nonconformists to pay £3 to the Bishop of the Diocese for licence to perform the marriage ceremony in their respective places of worship?"¹ The necessity for the registrar's presence even at an ordinary marriage in chapel cost Nonconformists five shillings extra in fees while, if resort was had to marriage by licence, the registrar's fee was ten shillings and the readiest, if not the cheapest, licence to get was often the ecclesiastical one, thanks to the great marriage powers still left "exclusively" with the Church.² It was not, in fact, until 1898 that a Marriage Act was passed under which Nonconformist chapels, licensed for marriages, might provide themselves with their own "authorised person" who could register marriages and so avoid the need for summoning the registrar. The "concession", when made at last, probably pleased nobody better than the Catholic priests who had, of late, co-operated closely with Churchmen and Conservatives in the work of defending "religious education", and who, of course, had a more marked distaste for the compulsory presence of the State's registrars at marriage-services than almost anyone else in the country. That probably was the consolation of those small groups of Conservatives, who had delayed "progress" by privately urging their doubts as to whether the possibly uneducated and unreliable "authorised persons" likely to come from some quarters of Protestant Dissent were to be trusted.³ Greatly though the Salvation Army, for example, had helped to win a place for "religion" among sections of the poor, prone, in times of

¹ W. S. Crawshay and F. W. Read, *The Politics of the Commons*, p. 115. The question was doubtless put by a Liberationist for it was worded misleadingly. Nonconformists were not compelled, if they wanted a licence, to go to the Bishop or a clergyman surrogate in their district. Superintendent registrars were entitled to issue licences for non-Church marriages.

² Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1886, p. 373, for the table of Registrar's fees. The greatest marriage power of all was, of course, that of the Archbishop of Canterbury whose "special licence" might allow marriage at any place with or without previous residence in the district, or at any time.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 1892, p. 249, for a long list of religious denominations and sects, with places of meeting certified to the Registrar-General. Here is a specimen extract: "Christian Army; Christian Believers; Christian Brethren; Christian Disciples; Christian Eliasites; Christian Evangelists; Christian Israelites; Christian Lay Church; Christian Mission; Christian Pioneers; Christian Soldiers; Christian Temperance Men; Christian Unionists; Christian Workers; Christians; Christians owning no name but Lord Jesus."

distress, to become dangerous, there must have been Conservatives with their private doubts as to whether the bestowal of greater marriage rights on the Army's Citadels and "authorised persons" was wise and proper.¹

There were "Burial Law" troubles, too, for the Church, despite the Gladstonian Burials Act of 1880, which had forced the churchyard gates open for the Dissenting Minister and the Dissenting funeral service. The Act of 1880 still left the incumbent arbiter of all manner of burial matters from the charge for the services of the sexton and the tolling of the bells to the location of the grave, and the permissible character of any proposed head-stone. In the numerous villages of the countryside where the churchyard was still the only burying-place available, the incumbent's "autocratic" power was bound sooner or later to provoke a "scandal" which, in the case of one who had been haughty or tactless with Dissenting ministers, was apt to lead to angry Radical questions in Parliament and heated Disestablishment writing in the *Liberator*.² And there was plenty of complaint, too, of the "gross inequality" which was alleged to rule in many of the public cemeteries that had been established after burial had had to be abandoned in hundreds of urban churchyards either because they were full or because the health authority had forbidden further burial for health reasons.³ Though, in such cases, public cemeteries had had to be provided at the ratepayer's expense and so, of course, there could be no question, as in the churchyard, of absolute Church control, too many public Burial Boards had, either willingly or unwillingly, accepted the parson's view that, if not entitled to the same unfettered domination he had enjoyed in his own churchyard, he could, at least, claim primacy among the ministers of religion having access to the cemetery. Often a strong personality had succeeded in re-establishing some of the churchyard position in the "consecrated" parts of the cemetery and in any cemetery

¹ Cf. J. G. Edwards, *Progress of Religious Thought in the XVIII and XIX Centuries*, pp. 190-3, for a disparaging view of the Army such as was not often so directly expressed as late as 1904.

² Cf. *Liberator* file for 1886 for a whole string of cases listed together in a special section of the index to the 1886 volume. Here are a few extracts from the index section: "Attempt to evade the Burials Act: The Bridgnorth Burial Case: Charlwood Fees Case: Fees taken without a service: Lambeth Burial Fees: Lewdham Evasion Case: The Springfield Obstruction Case: Refusal of service to the Unbaptised, etc., etc."

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, June 1 1886, p. 83: "In too many cases advantage has been taken of certain enactments in the Burial Acts, to secure unfair advantages for the members of the Established Church at the expense of the rest of the community."

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chapel that, though, perhaps, optimistically designed for general use, had had to submit to Anglican "consecration". That was why Burial Boards, especially in Wales, took to evading the "Burial Laws" and finding excuses for not sending for the Bishop to undertake a consecration ceremony which was criticised, in any case, as too expensive.¹ Indeed, when the Conservatives at last undertook some "Burial Law Reform" in 1900, they found it necessary to give the Home Secretary general powers to obtain episcopal consecration for a portion of any cemetery whose governing authority had refrained from doing so, though there was clear evidence that a "reasonable" proportion of the interested population desired it.² As Conservative quarters had also made it impossible for the Gladstonian Local Government Act of 1894 to bestow churchyard-burial control upon the Parish Councils created by that measure, it will be understood why the "Burial Laws" position was still considered unsatisfactory enough to provide part of the case for Disestablishment. The Conservatives, of course, argued that the "reforms" of 1900 under which they had regulated the provision of cemetery-chapels for the different denominations and established a system of uniform fees did all that was required. Dissenters in Wales or elsewhere who still claimed to have grievances were, according to Conservatives, merely playing Radical politics.³

The constant Anglican troubles on Ritualism were another factor which seemed, for a time, dangerously to weaken the Church. There can be no doubt but that Ritualism was mainly a clerical movement, unpopular with the bulk of the Church's own laity and so detested by the bulk of Nonconformity that a main argument against Conservative Education Bills was invariably that they threatened to strengthen the hold of "law-breaking" clerical "ritualisers" on the nation's children. Yet, by 1890 a Bishop of Lincoln had taken Ritualism so far that he was being

¹ Cf. *Daily News*, December 12, 1885: "One of the Burials Acts enacts that any cemetery provided under the Acts 'shall be divided into consecrated and unconsecrated parts', and the Burial Board is required to make application to the Bishop for consecration, although some boards have declined to do so, and, so far as I know, there has been no attempt to coerce them by legal process. . . ."

² Cf. *Nine Years Work, A Review of the Legislation and Administration of the Conservative and Unionist Government, 1895-1904*, p. 98.

³ Statements of this kind, of course, hardly took account of the special position in Wales whose Dissenting majority had wished to improve upon the terms of the official Welsh Disestablishment Bill of 1895 and to give the parish councils large rights over the churchyard.

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tried before his Archbishop for "unlawful practices", and by 1898 the anti-ritualistic activities of J. A. Kensit had apparently taken on the full dimensions of a "national question".¹ It would seem, however, that organised "Protestant" commotions in Ritualistic churches eventually produced reactions among the "public" helpful to the Ritualists² who could certainly be said to have borne their trials bravely and who were taking their full part, too, in the "settlement work" of the slums. The Salvation Army, though at the opposite pole of Protestantism, had, in the previous decade, profited from exactly the same type of kindly sentiment called out by the sight of "persecution" perseveringly borne. The fact, however, that the noisy, tasteless self-assertiveness of Salvation Army methods and the Ritualists' craving for reviving every medieval ceremony should be figuring so prominently in the national life even in the opening years of the twentieth century, showed how over-optimistic had been the "advanced" thinking which had held religion to be on the verge of collapse. Despite the ever-growing divorce of "science" from religion, despite the increasing boldness with which the "Higher Criticism" was treating the New Testament as well as the Old,³ the greatest controversies in English politics were still those in which, as on the Education Act of 1902, chapel and Church interests were ranged in furious combat. And it is from some of the literature provoked by that heated contest, literature in which the chapels again attempted to prove their case for Disestablishment by arguing that the Church only attracted a fraction of the nation, that,

¹ Cf. S. Smith, *My Life-Work*, pp. 388-413.

² Cf. *Cassell's Illustrated History of England*, ix, 175-9, for the tone taken by a "popular" work: "Disgraceful scenes occurred in some of these holy edifices, and occasionally Mr. Kensit assisted in person . . . several exciting scenes occurred in a Shoreditch, a Liverpool, and a Sunderland church. . . . The next week saw a renewal of vulgar and disgraceful conduct, this time in the church of St. James-the-Less at Kirkdale, where the Evangelical brawlers greeted the cross-bearer with cries of 'Chuck him out', and, when the Sanctus bell sounded, yelled amidst loud laughter, 'Ring the bell, Sammy!' When the Vicar was intoning the Lord's Prayer there was a shout from some follower of Mr. Kensit of 'Don't cry'. Other disturbances followed in various districts with the precision of a preconcerted campaign. . . ."

³ Cf. *Radical Views about the New Testament* (Van Eysinga, translated 1912 by S. Slack) which is a popular treatment of what the Dutch Radical school had been busy with ever since Allard Pierson's book of 1878, *The Sermon on the Mount and other Synoptic Fragments*. Some of the views of the Dutch school on matters like the spuriousness of the Pauline Epistles had already attracted sufficient attention for Van Manen to be invited to write in the *Expository Times* for February, March and April 1898. And, despite the "energetic protests of the English press" Van Manen was also asked to contribute some of the articles on Paulinism to the *Encyclopædia Biblica*.

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perhaps, the most revealing facts about the condition of "organised religion" in the first decade of the twentieth century are to be found.

This chapter, indeed, can hardly be ended more appropriately than by quoting two passages from a massive volume entitled *The Religious Life of London* and issued in 1904 on the basis of a "Religious Census" organised by the Radical *Daily News* when the Education Act battle was at its fiercest.¹ Percy Alden of the Mansfield House Settlement, and soon to become a Radical M.P., shall be quoted on the "problem of East London" and Charles Masterman, also destined to make part of the immense Radical majority of 1906 and to go even farther, shall be quoted on the "problem of South London". Here are some of Percy Alden's observations on the religious position in East London:²

There is far less open antagonism and hostility to religion and religious influences than there used to be. Ten years ago I found a considerable amount of undisguised hatred both of the parson and of the Church. To-day there is little of this to be found, although it must be admitted that neither Church nor parson is loved by the Socialist working man, or the Trade Unionist with a strong political leaning. . . . Mr. Booth says that the mass of the population remains "alienated or unconcerned". On the whole it seems to me to be a true verdict. . . . The question of *apathy and unconcern* is really more difficult than the question of antagonism. . . . Meanwhile we hear that in many parts of the East End, especially in the poorest districts, the people will take to anything that is novel and fresh, but they have no persistence; they go to church as a favour to the visitor who calls; they desire some attraction beyond the ordinary service; they need, in fact, a special service every day—something which will give a little interest to a life which is dull and monotonous. Nothing surprises me more than the attendance at a Harvest Festival. To very few has the harvest any special significance . . . but nothing gives them greater pleasure than the sight of huge stacks of corn and oats, of vegetables and fruits. . . . The attendance at the Harvest Festival has not the same explanation as that of the New Year's Eve services. The latter is due as largely as anything to superstition. . . . I see that Mr. Booth thinks that dress does not count, that the working classes would come if they wanted to, whether they had the right sort of clothing or not. . . . My own experience leads me to think this is a mistake . . . if the services are held in some large music-hall, where large masses of the working classes sit closely packed together, the ill-clad pass unnoticed in the throng and feel themselves less out of place. . . .

¹ *The Religious Life of London* (1904, ed. R. Mudie-Smith), p. 15: "The investigations made by the *Daily News* extended over a year—namely, from November 1902 to November 1903. . . ."

² *Ibid.*, pp. 24-5, 29-30.

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And here is Charles Masterman's treatment of the denominational attendance statistics gathered by the *Daily News* in South London:¹

In South London the poor (except the Roman Catholic poor) do not attend service on Sunday, though there are a few churches and missions which gather some, and forlorn groups can be collected by a liberal granting of relief.

The working man does not come to church. A few small communities of Primitive Methodists, Baptists, Salvationists, and similar bodies, as a general rule represent his contribution to the religious life of the nation.

The tradesmen and middle class of the poorer boroughs exhibit an active religious life, mainly gathered in the larger Nonconformist bodies, especially the Baptists.

The residents in the suburbs crowd their churches and chapels, and support with impartiality and liberality all forms of organised religion.

¹ *The Religious Life of London*, p. 201.

CHAPTER XXVII

EPILOGUE, 1906-14

"The urban landlord and the mineral royalty owner are invariably rackrenters. They extort the highest and the heaviest ground rent or royalty they can obtain on the sternest commercial principles. They are never restrained by that sense of personal relationship with their tenants which exercises such a beneficent and moderating influence upon the very same landlord in his dealings with his agricultural tenants. And the distinction is not confined merely to the rent. Take the conditions of the tenancy. I am not here to defend many of the terms which are included in many an agricultural agreement for tenancy. I think many of them are oppressive. . . . But compared with the conditions imposed upon either a colliery owner or upon a town lessee they are the very climax of generosity."

Mr. Lloyd George introducing the "People's Budget",
April 29, 1909.

"At the back of the Tory mind you find this: Tories firmly believe that Providence has singled them out to govern this land. They think that they are the governing classes, and that if they are not governing there must be something wrong. In 1906 they were turned out of power. They thought it was just a temporary visitation. . . . But when a second election came with the same result and a third election came and Radicals were still in power, the Tories became troubled. They saw Bills go through Parliament, and, what was still worse, they found Tories expected to obey them as if they were common people. They found Radicals on the Benches as Magistrates and Radicals becoming Judges. They found Radicals as Ministers receiving Kings and Presidents. They saw Radicalism governing the Empire, and things were getting from bad to worse. And they said, 'There is no knowing that it might not even happen again. There is the Plural Voting Bill.' They found trade prospering and the country going on, and at last their balance is completely upset. . . . Supposing I had devoted as much time and energy to defending privilege and monopoly in land, in the Church Establishment, in the liquor traffic, in the House of Lords, as I have devoted to assailing them, do you think a word would have been said in the Tory Press . . . in regard to this ('Marconi scandal') matter? No, what has happened to us has happened because in office we have stood by the people who put us there."

Mr. Lloyd George, July 1, 1913.

THE Campbell-Bannerman Cabinet, completed by December 11, 1905, dissolved Parliament on January 8, 1906. There would, in any case, have been a violent "swing of the pendulum" away from a party which, like Balfour's, had held office without a break for almost ten years and a half. The non-party voter was frankly tired of the long period of Conservative and Unionist ascendancy and, as was inevitable after ex-Ministers had been in power for so long, he was often eager to punish them for one part or another of their fiercely assailed record.

The election precedents regarded by the experts as particularly pertinent, were the revulsions of feeling from the five years of Gladstone's rule in 1874, from the six years of Disraeli's rule in 1880 and from the three years of feeble Liberalism in 1895. But if the experts were aware that the non-party voter's desire to secure a change from a much-criticised Government might have become almost explosive after ten years and a half, even they were taken aback by the magnitude of the actual electoral upheavals recorded. Elections had begun on January 12th, and on January 13th the full revulsion of feeling from ex-Ministers could at last be estimated from such startling results as those at Manchester and Salford. At Salford, represented by three Conservatives in the last Parliament, all the Conservatives were ejected and followers of Campbell-Bannerman returned instead. And at Manchester, five of whose six representatives, including Balfour himself, had been returned in 1900 to support ex-Ministers, all five Conservative seats were lost, three to direct followers of Campbell-Bannerman and two to "independent" Labour men whose professions of "advanced Socialism" had, according to Conservatism, branded them as much more dangerous even than the extremest of Campbell-Bannerman's "extreme Radicals". That the "Socialist" Clynes should have ejected a Conservative Privy Councillor by 5,386 votes against 2,954 is possibly as good a measure of the electoral revolution of 1906 as that a Liberal K.C. should have ejected the Conservative ex-Premier by 6,403 votes against 4,423. In the end, 381 Liberals were elected to support Campbell-Bannerman with a supplement of 19 in what was sometimes called the Trade Union Liberal Party. "Independent Labour" numbered 30 and the Irish Nationalists 83. Against

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this grand total of 513 elected to keep ex-Ministers from power, only 157 were elected in their support.

As things were constituted in Britain, this electoral "revolution", accomplished by "progressive opinion", denoted no real desire for any fundamental change. The biggest single element in the victorious majority was a Nonconformist *bloc*, sometimes numbered as two hundred strong and constituted for the most part of prosperous business men, with a fringe of lawyers, journalists, writers, preachers, and "Lib.-Lab." working men.¹ If this *bloc* meant to end "Chinese Slavery" on the Rand, defeat "Imperialism" in all its manifestations, reduce Armaments expenditure and readjust taxation in order to press more lightly on the poor and more heavily on "landlordism", its loudest and most consistently pressed demand was for an end of the "Tory" Education Act of 1902. Another Act, they held, must be substituted which should not merely cancel the special advantages that the Church of England was held to have obtained by the Act of 1902 but which should bring to an end the whole "privileged" position that the Church, with the aid of "public money", had been allowed to establish in Public Education since 1839.

It was a Government Education Bill, therefore, which dominated the long 1906 Session, and it was drafted to force the surrender of the great mass of the Church's "Voluntary Schools" to the management of the "unsectarian" local authorities. Some concessions were offered in return, but it could be held that the Majority had even thought it worth while to offer Catholic and Jewish "Voluntary Schools" far better terms than were available to the great bulk of "Church Schools" so that the Anglicans might be the more isolated. Catholic and Jewish School Managers would apparently have been able to take advantage of the "extended facilities" for denominational religious instruction offered to

¹ C. T. King, *The Asquith Parliament*, pp. 132-3: "Small wonder that sectarian religious feeling runs high on this education question. There sat among the two hundred Nonconformists Mr. J. Compton-Rickett of P.S.A. fame, deacon of the City Temple. . . . There sat Mr. Ferens, the prominent Wesleyan speaker, a Sunday School superintendent for thirty years. There was Mr. A. A. Black, a local preacher; Mr. A. E. Hutton, a pillar of Congregationalism; Mr. Batty Langley . . . Mr. George Nichols, who left the gravel-pit for the chapel pulpit . . . Mr. A. E. Dunn . . . Mr. G. Hay Morgan . . . Alderman Duckworth of Rochdale, a pillar indeed of the United Methodist Free Church . . . Mr. (afterwards Sir) R. W. Perks . . . Mr. Silcock of Argyle Chapel; Professor Massie, a maker of Nonconformist preachers down at Mansfield College . . . Mr. Albert Spicer . . . Mr. Goddard Clarke . . . Mr. George White. . . . These were but a few of the strongly grounded, unshakable Nonconformists. . . ."

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schools attended by children, eighty per cent, at least, of whose parents desired it. But in the bulk of "Church Schools", much more miscellaneously attended, as they were, it was expected that an eighty per cent parent-demand would be unobtainable, and, in that case, the utmost the surrendering Managers could bargain for was "facilities" for denominational instruction two mornings a week. Even so the grant of such "facilities" depended on the local authority, which could also withdraw what it had granted; the normal teaching staff was not to take part in the "denominational instruction"; and there was no compulsory attendance to be enforced even upon those who had expressed a wish for the "denominational instruction".

The Parliamentary efforts needed to push this Bill through the forms of the British Constitution make up a great part of the Sessional story. After absorbing most of the country's political energy between April 9th and July 30th, it was carried, much shorn and by repeated use of the Closure, through all its stages in the Lower House.¹ Early in August, the Houses adjourned for a Summer Recess, ended in the latter part of October when Parliament returned to complete the Sessional programme of which the Education Bill was the major measure. The Peers, of course, resolved not to fly in the face of the great Government majority in the Lower House but to whittle the Bill down by "amendments", whose expected effects had often been carefully studied by the Bishops. And the Bill's alteration was effected with sufficient acuteness to provide Ministers, at no single stage, with the materials for an overwhelming agitation against the Peers and the Bishops, "guilty of frustrating the people's will". Ministers even studied possible compromises before announcing, on December 20th, amid menaces to the Upper House, that the Education Bill, as there amended, was completely unpalatable and would be abandoned. It was, of course, universally assumed, in view of the bitter temper of Nonconformist England, that the struggle was not over but would be resumed in succeeding Sessions until the "cup was brimming over" and the "nation's indignation" could be successfully mobilised at a General Election.²

¹ Cf. *Hansard* for the proceedings of April 9th; May 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th (Second Reading); May 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 28th (Committee, First Clause); June 11th, 12th, 19th (Committee, Second Clause), etc., etc.

² Cf. C. T. King, *The Asquith Parliament*, pp. 155-6, for the Prime Minister's warning: "The resources of the British Constitution are not wholly exhausted."

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The story of "Progress", during the 1906 Session, was not, of course, confined to the bitterly pushed Education Bill. On Army and Navy matters there was "retrenchment" to press and the remnants of flogging to abolish; on Ireland there was the resolve to let the Peace Preservation Act of 1881 run out, without renewal, and to cancel all the proclamations under the Crimes Act of 1887; and in the Empire, there was "Chinese Slavery" to deal with as well as full self-government to grant to the Boers. Every Government Department, in fact, had some item of "Progress" it was preparing or being called on to grant. At the Exchequer, Asquith drew up a Budget in which the Conservatives' Coal Export Duty was cancelled; at the Home Office, Mr. Herbert Gladstone issued a new and more "liberal" set of Regulations for the Administration of the Aliens Act;¹ and at the Local Government Board, John Burns decided, after some hesitation, to provide £200,000 in case the problem of "relief works for the unemployed" threatened, as in 1904 and 1905, to grow more anxious as the winter came on. Even the Foreign Office showed signs that the Radical agitation of such bodies as the Congo Reform Association, the Balkan Committee, and the Friends of Russian Freedom was far from wasted,² and John Morley, at the India Office, was early planning a considerable advance in Indian self-government.

It is certainly time to complete the record of "Progress" during the Session of 1906. Among the "advanced" pieces of legislation placed on the Statute Book was a Justices of the Peace Bill to abolish the property qualification hitherto required from county magistrates.³ A second "advanced" Bill which reached the Statute Book, after considerable amendment by the Lords, was an Agricultural Holdings Bill to alter some of the legal relations hitherto existing between landlord and tenant-farmer.⁴ As first drafted, the Bill made the landlord's consent unnecessary for the

The resources of the House of Commons are not exhausted. I say with conviction that a way must be found, that a way will be found, by which the will of the people, expressed through their elected representatives in this House, will be made to prevail."

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, March 12th and 14th, for discussion in the Commons.

² Other organisations, aiming at increased influence on British foreign policy, were the Friends of Armenia, the Byron Society, the Aborigines Protection Society, the Anti-Slavery Society, the Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade, and the Native Races and the Liquor Traffic United Committee.

³ "Working men" magistrates could now be nominated to all Benches.

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, March 9th, for the Bill's first introduction as a private member's measure (Mr. Agar-Robartes). It was later adopted by the Government.

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repair of buildings, the laying down of permanent pasture, the planting of orchards, and the undertaking of fruit and vegetable culture. The landlord's right of distraint for rent was limited to one year; the tenant was authorised to claim compensation for damage to his crops by game that he had not the lawful right to kill; the limitation that a tenant should only use one gun in killing ground game was abolished; and, finally, it was provided that the tenant-farmer should enjoy freedom of cropping. Against these "extreme" proposals the Lords used something of the strategy employed against the Education Bill, and by the time 71 amendments had been made, the Bill went to the Statute Book shorn of much of its "advanced Radicalism". The Lords hesitated not to destroy more "advanced Radicalism" when, on December 10th, they rejected a Plural Voting Bill intended to place the "One Man, One Vote" principle on the Statute Book. The Peers took care, of course, to stress the fact that, in acting as they did, they were concerned, not to protect the "plural voter", whose properties or tenancies allowed him to vote several times over in different constituencies, but to prevent Ministers from snatching a party advantage by dealing with only one limited aspect of the complicated problem of Over- and Under-Representation.¹ But plausible as was the case, made in the Lords, for delaying the abolition of Plural Voting until Ministers had produced a thoroughgoing Redistribution Bill making every vote of equal value, the Peers were undoubtedly taking some risks. But, perhaps, they were relying on the signs of "reaction" that had reputedly set in, and on the conciliatory effect of their readiness to admit a number of other "progressive" measures to the Statute Book, particularly interesting to the "people". There was a Workmen's Compensation Bill, re-defining "workman" and extending the benefits of statutory compensation to six million workers including shop-assistants, seamen, clerks, transport-workers, and domestic servants. There was a Merchant Shipping Bill to improve the dietary of British merchant sailors and the amount of cubic space allowed them, and there was, also, the Education (Provision of Meals) Bill to permit local authorities, at an annual cost not exceeding a halfpenny rate, to provide meals for hungry

¹ Conservative party literature was full of the "over-representation" of Nationalist Ireland and the "under-representation" of great suburban areas, of their own political complexion, whose development had only taken place after the last Redistribution Act of 1885.

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school-children. Finally, peaceful picketing was legalised, and Trade Union funds protected from the effect of the Taff Vale Judgement, in the Trades Disputes Bill.

Yet it was not pure Conservative imagination that detected that a "reaction" of a kind against the great Radical majority had begun to set in before it was many months in the saddle. Undoubtedly Radicalism of the old Victorian kind was beginning to lose its charm for increasing masses of working-class folk, attracted to "Socialism", while the repulsion of strong shopkeeper and bourgeois elements from "Socialism" was tending to drive them straight into the arms of Conservatism. There was a distinct foreshadowing of things to come in the remarkable defeats inflicted on the London "Progressives", first, at the London Borough Council Elections of November 1906 and, then, in the London County Council Election of March 1907.¹ Of course, it is wise not to exaggerate what was effected in the London elections of the winter of 1906-7 by intense and not very scrupulous Conservative propaganda and, certainly, the great Radical majority in Parliament, reduced nothing of its pressure for changes that had, in some cases, been on "advanced Liberal" programmes for generations.

The oldest Radical demands that were taken to the Statute Book, during the 1907 Session, were those for a Deceased Wife's Sister Bill and for a differentiation between earned and unearned income in the Income Tax. After generations of Nonconformist effort a man was at last given permission to marry his deceased wife's sister despite the Church's list of prohibited degrees. And after protests that dated back almost as long as the Income Tax itself, Asquith, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, resolved to use his Budget opportunity to give "earned" incomes under £2,000 per annum a reduction of Income Tax to 9*d.* in the pound while leaving the tax on "unearned" income at 1*s.*, a reduction, too, that he proposed partly to finance by increasing the Death Duties on estates of over £150,000. A third measure, whose admission to the Statute Book by the Peers represented some retreat from a

¹ Cf. *Whitaker's Almanack*, 1908, under Municipal Politics (pp. 395-6): "1906 November 1st. The London Borough Council elections resulted in a striking victory for the Moderate (Municipal Reform) Party. . . . March 2nd (1907). The triennial elections of the London County Council resulted in a sweeping majority for the Municipal Reform Party." Opponents of "Municipal Socialism", as practised by the Radical-Socialist "Progressives", had found it useful to christen themselves "Municipal Reformers" though the name of "Moderates" was also used.

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previously maintained position, was the Evicted Tenants (Ireland) Bill which was intended to smooth the way to the provision of land for the tenants who had lost their farms owing to their participation in the "Plan of Campaign" of 1886-7. For twenty years the plight of these evicted families had agitated the Irish countryside, and the Lords, with some reluctance, accepted the principle of coming specially to their aid, though only if the number to be aided was limited to 2,000.¹

A fourth Bill, which marked some advance of "Progress", was the Small Holdings Bill to allow County Councils, and, in their default, the Board of Agriculture to acquire land compulsorily and to let it, in small holdings of from five to fifty acres, to those rural elements, principally ambitious farm labourers, who were "drifting from the land" because the acquisition of an ordinary farm-tenancy was beyond them. The measure hardly had the effect in arresting "Rural Depopulation" that was hoped but, for a considerable time, it was attacked and defended as the most "advanced" piece of "Socialism" the British countryside had yet seen.²

Yet "Progress" had rebuffs and defeats, too, ascribable, directly or indirectly, to the Peers who rejected two Scottish Land Bills and who would have had scant welcome for the Education Bill (1907) and the Irish Council Bill if Ministers had not withdrawn them first.³ The amount of heat generated by the Lords' refusal to have the Small Landholders (Scotland) Bill and the Land Values (Scotland) Bill may be estimated from the fact that both Bills were reintroduced in 1908, were passed through all stages in the Commons, and were sent, with newspaper and platform menace, to face the Lords once more. But the Small Landholders (Scotland) Bill had been drafted to set up a Land Court in Scotland to which tenants might apply for reductions of rent. And the purpose of

¹ Cf. *Hansard* (Lords), August 6th, 9th, 12th, and 15th for the reluctance and amendments of the Peers, declined, in some instances, by the Commons.

² *Doncaster Gazette*, March 8, 1907, reporting a speech of Lord Crewe, defending Ministers' policy for improving matters in the countryside: "In his judgement what was required to deal with it was some very large and wide scheme. . . . Not to put too fine a point on it, it was upon some Socialistic lines that this question would have to be settled. . . . It is essentially a matter for settlement on Socialistic lines. . . ."

³ The Education Bill of 1907 proposed to treat one-fifteenth of a teacher's time in a "Voluntary School" as devoted to "denominational religious instruction" and to transfer responsibility for one-fifteenth of the teacher's pay from the local education authority to the School Managers. The Irish Council Bill seemed intended to present Ireland with a considerable instalment of "Home Rule".

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the Land Values (Scotland) Bill was, to the Peers, the most objectionable one of getting the Scottish local authorities to value land separately from the structures upon it so that, as was suspected, a basis might be laid for the taxation of site-values. The Peers, however, hesitated not to reject both Bills once more,¹ and yet another check to "Progress" was administered when they rejected the "great" Licensing Bill of 1908 under which there would have been a reduction of 30,000 public-houses in fourteen years, and Sunday opening would have been limited to four hours in London and three elsewhere. The Peers were, doubtless, encouraged to boldness by the "famous" Peckham election in which the "Drink Interest" had taken a prominent part in inflicting a "phenomenal" defeat upon a Government candidate who was made the victim of every outcry against the Ministers from that of the Tariff Reformers to those of the Voluntary School Managers, the Military and Naval Alarmists, the Coal Consumers Defence League (which presumably did not welcome the Coal Mines (Eight Hours) Bill), and the Brewery Debenture Shareholders League.² And after the Peckham Election had set a long train of Government by-election woes in motion, which even the Old Age Pensions Bill quite failed to stay, the Peers had grown more and more challenging. The rejection of the Licensing Bill of 1908 was a good deal more uncompromising than the rejection of the Education Bill had been in 1906.

It was obvious that Government counter-strategy, for the 1909 Session, would have to be carefully planned. Asquith, who had succeeded the dying Campbell-Bannerman as Prime Minister in April 1908, had appointed Lloyd George to the Exchequer, and a Budget of unprecedented boldness was drafted intended to put upon "landlordism" and the "Drink Monopoly" new taxation, needed, it was claimed, to meet the cost of increased naval armaments and the Old Age Pensions Bill. There were other important Bills on the Sessional agenda, of course, besides the Finance Bill—the South Africa Bill to create the South African Union; the Indian Councils Bill; the Irish Land Bill; the Housing and Town Planning Bill; the Labour Exchanges Bill; the Trades Board Bill for sweated industries; the Welsh Disestablishment Bill, dropped for lack of

¹ *The Case against Radicalism* (1910), pp. 339-40.

² C. F. G. Masterman, *The Condition of England* (ed. 1911), pp. 109-13, for a treatment of the Peckham Election of the spring of 1908 as one of the most curious and revealing of the social phenomena of the day.

time, and the London Elections Bill (to abolish Plural Voting in London), rejected by the Lords. But the new taxation, proposed in the Finance Bill, became the great subject of party controversy, and if there were the strongest objections to the "vindictively" heavy increase of the Liquor Taxes, imposed, it was alleged, in revenge for the Licensing Bill defeat of 1908,¹ if the Income Tax and Death Duty enhancements were hotly attacked,² the loudest Opposition outcry was against the new Land Taxes. The Radicals, it was claimed, were preparing to meet the "reddest" Socialism half-way by taking the first steps towards Land Nationalisation,³ and were taking them, too, in a vindictive way that showed that Land Confiscation rather than Land Nationalisation was their aim.⁴ Because the Lords had protected Church School managers from outrageous proposals in 1906 and the brewers and publicans from a confiscatory plan in 1908, an unjust quarrel was, it was claimed, to be fastened upon them, the support of the "man in the street" was to be claimed on the most plausible grounds, and, finally, after another "tricky" General Election, the Constitution was to be annulled and the power of the Upper House broken.

The Budget's Land proposals, forming as they did the heart of the absorbing fiscal controversy of 1909-10, need a brief particularisation. The State was to begin taking its share of landowners' "unearned increments" in four different ways:

(a) By taking a 20 per cent duty on the increase of site-values when property changed hands by sale, the grant of a long lease or death.

(b) By taking a 10 per cent duty on the value of the benefit accruing when a lease for over 21 years fell in.

(c) By levying an Undeveloped Land Duty on such land as might be presumed to be "held back" from urban or industrial development until a high enough price was reached.

(d) By taking a tax on Landowners' Mining Royalties and Way-leaves.

¹ *The Case against Radicalism* (1910), p. 195.

² The most noteworthy innovation in these departments was the introduction of a super-tax of 6d. in the pound, payable by those with incomes of over £5,000.

³ Cf. *New Age* (Socialist), May 6, 1909: "We shall be quite frank about Mr. Lloyd George's Budget; it is splendid. Two minor defects apart, the Budget is not only more than we had dared to hope . . . but almost as much as we could have expected from a Socialist Chancellor in his first year of office. . . . We cannot deny, and we have no intention of denying, that the author of the present Budget is good enough statesman for a Socialist to support during the next five or ten years at any rate. . . . It is certain that a vista of Socialist reconstructive statesmanship is opened up on all sides by Mr. Lloyd George's Budget."

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, July 22, 1909: "The principles of the Bill are in themselves worth something, even if for a year or two they result in nothing more than a

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The Parliamentary struggle on these proposals raged from the Budget's introduction on April 29th until the House of Lords' inevitable refusal to enact it during November 1909.¹ Aware, of course, that a critical General Election would inevitably follow, with loud and "plausible" outcries against the selfishness of landlords and Peers, who demanded more Dreadnoughts against Germany but refused to pay for them, the Peers tried to choose the most favourable possible grounds for declining to enact the Budget that had been sent them. They were neither rejecting it nor amending it, they claimed, but merely making sure that Ministers would have to go to the "country" and obtain a specific majority for their unprecedented proposals. The Ministers' reply came on December 2nd when, in the Commons, it was declared, by a majority of 349 against 134, that the Upper House had committed a breach of the Constitution. Parliament was quickly prorogued, and the Dissolution followed on January 15, 1910. At the elections that ensued, the Opposition, now relatively united for Tariff Reform, polled well and regained much of the ground lost in 1906. But, as the final state of the parties showed 275 Liberals, 82 Irish Nationalists, 40 Labour, and 273 Conservatives, the House of Lords might certainly be presumed to have received the "country's" answer on the Budget. In fact, after the revived Budget's Third Reading had been carried in the Commons, on April 27, 1910, by 324 votes against 231, the Lords made no more trouble.

Ministers, of course, had not the slightest intention of allowing the Lords to preserve their "veto" unscathed after the challenge to the "people's will" that had been made on the Budget. They had already passed Veto Resolutions through the Commons and introduced a Bill, founded on them, before the Budget business was over. And it could be argued quite truly that the "people" had pronounced, at the elections, not merely on the Budget but on the continual frustration of the "people's will" that the Peers had been undertaking since the Reform Bill days of 1831.² But no immediate political crisis was fated to result from Ministers' proposals to end the Peers' power to amend or reject a Money Bill general valuation and registration of land. It will save us a good deal of trouble and delay when we finally decide to resume possession of England."

¹ More revealing, perhaps, than the interminable columns of *Hansard* are the formation of a Budget League, issuing *The Budget, the Land and the People*, and the issue of a *Land Reformers' Hand Book for 1909*.

² Roebuck's *Pamphlets for the People* conducted an early Radical crusade against the Peers in 1835 after they had frustrated some "reforming" measures.

and to confine their power against other Bills to compelling the Commons' majority, if they wanted them on the Statute Book, to pass them in three successive Sessions. King Edward VII died on May 6th, and rather than face the new and inexperienced monarch George V with a great constitutional crisis, Ministers and Opposition made a prolonged attempt to reach a compromise.¹ The attempt was not given up until November when Ministers apparently decided that they were not prepared to allow the House of Lords to force an "appeal to the people", whether by General Election or by Referendum, whenever the House of Commons majority proposed to make "fundamental" changes in the Constitution. Nearly every major piece of legislation produces changes, describable as "fundamental", and Ministers were apparently determined not to allow even a "reformed House of Lords" more than a suspensive veto for three Sessions. To judge from later Parliamentary proceedings they would have been prepared to define the length of the Lords' suspensive veto not merely as three Parliamentary Sessions but also as two calendar years, and other "concessions" might have been available in such matters as the definition of a "Money Bill". But Conservatives saw dreadful visions of Home Rule, Welsh Disestablishment and the Abolition of Plural Voting being carried through the existing Parliament without a fresh "appeal to the people", not to mention new versions of the Education Bill of 1906 and the Licensing Bill of 1908. And, truth to tell, even with the five years' limit on the duration of Parliaments already offered by Ministers, there would theoretically have been the possibility, if the Opposition had given way, of carrying all these things, and others too, before the next General Election.

The "Veto Conference" had completely broken down, however, when Parliament reassembled on November 15, 1910. Ministers now held themselves entitled to advise the King to dissolve Parliament as soon as outstanding business had been disposed of, and, in a confidential communication, they made the further assumption that, if the new General Election gave them a sufficient majority, the royal prerogative of creating Peers would be placed at their disposal in order to carry the Veto Bill through the Upper House. Parliament was, in fact, dissolved on November 28th, and

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, June 13th and July 28th, for the statements made to Parliament on the "Veto Conference" by Asquith. By the latter date, twelve meetings had already been held between Ministerial and Opposition representatives. More meetings followed during the Recess.

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a General Election held which caused only the slightest alteration in the Parliamentary position. And as the Asquith Government was now supported, in its desire for a Veto Bill, by a majority of 126, such a measure, by the name of the Parliament Bill, was advanced through all its stages in the Commons between February 21 and May 10, 1911.¹ Meanwhile the National Insurance Bill had been drafted with much of whose detail the Commons were occupied while the Lords dealt with the Parliament Bill. And "Progress" advanced another step when, on May 16th, Mr. Lloyd George announced a Budget wherein provision was made for the payment of members of parliament at the rate of £400 a year.

Much of the time of public men was taken in June by Coronation preparations and ceremonies, and a Parliament Bill storm did not blow up until the measure, much altered and amended in the Lords, was ready for return to the Commons. Then Ministers revealed that they had already requested and obtained a Royal promise to create as many Peers as might be necessary to carry their Parliament Bill through the Upper House. Of course, there had never been a mass-creation of, perhaps, 450 Peers in English history before, and the Opposition held both that such a creation would be unconstitutional and that a Royal promise to take such a step could only have been extorted from the Sovereign by misrepresentation and undue pressure. There was a very wild scene, therefore, when the Prime Minister rose in the Commons, on July 24th, to refuse the Lords' amendments and to restore the Parliament Bill to its original form. The Prime Minister was howled down and the Speaker eventually adjourned the House. There was more howling next day, from the other side of the Commons, and dissent from the Lords' amendments was not finally carried until August 8th and after the offer of some slight concessions by the Government.² Among the Peers, meanwhile, the "Die Hard" movement had arisen to insist on large amendments and to dare the Government to create the threatened masses of Peers. Though the "Die Hards" just failed to force a crisis on August 10th and the Parliament Bill received the Royal Assent on August 18th, party politics grew steadily more agitated and bitter. The result was first seen when the Houses returned from a Summer Recess to finish the handling of the National Insurance Bill.

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, May 10th, for the Third Reading majority of 362-241.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, August 8th, for Winston Churchill's speech. He led the House in the absence of the Prime Minister, ill with laryngitis.

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Many opportunities were taken to make trouble for the Ministry, and after the Bill had been placed on the Statute Book in December, the Opposition hardly discouraged the doctors, during 1912, from repeatedly bringing the Insurance plan to the verge of ruin.

The last phase of the Radicalism, initiated in the Wilkes era and "progressing" ever since, may be said to have opened on February 14, 1912, when a Session began in which Ministers intended to carry Bills for Home Rule, Welsh Disestablishment and Equal Suffrage through the Commons. The process, it was hoped, would be repeated in two further Sessions, and the Bills be placed on the Statute Book, despite rejections by the Lords, during the course of 1914. The Parliament Act was, in fact, so implicitly relied upon, that planning for a General Election, to take place in 1914 or 1915, was begun with "The Land for the People" as the Radical party-cry.¹ Obviously, Ministers underrated some of the problems facing them, and this, despite considerable experience of the nervous excitation of the times as instanced in the Women's Suffrage "outrages", the succession of continental crises, and the hot alarmism of the Army and Navy "experts" calling for instant Conscription and incessant Dreadnought-building if the Empire were to be saved and German invasion staved off.² Even "Labour", instead of showing the slightest "gratitude" for the National Insurance Act or the slightest readiness to wait for the "certain fruits" of the Parliament Act, plunged into a long series of "aggressive" strikes, often under "extremist" leadership.³ Of course, "syndicalist" leadership was yet no match for Employers' Federations, resolute enough to hire "Free Labour" in masses and set it to work under police-protection. Indeed, the fact that police and military so soon mastered the rioting against the importation of "Free Labour" black-legs into places like the London Docks may have helped Ministers to believe that the Ulster preparations to resist the imposition of Home Rule by force would almost inevitably break down in very much the same way. In a speech given on October 5, 1912, just before Parliament was due to return from Summer Recess to finish

¹ Cf. *Britannica Year Book*, 1913, p. 513, for the "land agitation", dominated by Henry George's school of "Single Taxers". There was set up "an unofficial Committee of Inquiry under Mr. Lloyd George's auspices, with the authority of the Cabinet, in order to obtain evidence of various sorts of agrarian grievances". "Intense exasperation" we are told, "was created on the Conservative side."

² Cf. C. E. Playne, *The Pre-War Mind in Britain*.

³ *Britannica Year Book*, 1913 ("Labour Unrest" section).

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the Committee stage of the Home Rule Bill, the Prime Minister felt confident enough to take quite a scornful attitude towards the Ulster activities under Sir Edward Carson, and the support bestowed upon them by Opposition's new leader, Bonar Law.

There was, of course, much bitter party recrimination as the Home Rule, Welsh Disestablishment and Franchise Bills were being pushed through the Commons, by Closure methods and against countless amendments, between October 1912 and February 1913. There were occasional setbacks, too, as when an accidental defeat of the Government on November 11th cost a week of Parliamentary time to set right and when, on January 27th, the Speaker's ruling on the effect of a suggested Women's Suffrage amendment to the Franchise Bill, forced the Bill's withdrawal for the Session.¹ Only the Home Rule Bill and the Welsh Disestablishment Bill, therefore, went on to the Lords and, though heavily defeated there, could, under the Parliament Act, count as having been taken a third of their journey towards the Statute Book. Doubtless Ministers would have had even greater troubles to encounter but for the outbreak of the Balkan Wars and the development of a most critical dispute, in consequence, between Austria and Russia. When blood was flowing in torrents in the Balkans and tremendous armies mustering on the Austro-Russian frontiers, some of the Ulster demonstrations tended, doubtless, to look dangerously like play-acting. And when Ministers seemed to be leading Europe with some authority and success in re-establishing a tolerable peace, the apparently wild and whirling words of Carson, Smith and even Bonar Law tended to sound almost criminally irresponsible in other places than the National Liberal Club.

Encouraged, perhaps, by their relative advantage of position, Ministers resolved on some very challengeable innovations. Only three days after the almost endless Session, begun on February 14, 1912, was terminated by prorogation, a new Session was opened on March 10, 1913. And, once again, the main purpose of the Session was to be the advancement of three "Parliament Act Bills" nearer the Statute Book over the veto of the Lords, the Home Rule and Welsh Disestablishment Bills for their second Session, and a

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, January 27th, for the Speaker's ruling that a Women's Suffrage amendment would alter the Bill so profoundly in character and measure of enfranchisement that its introduction, in Committee, would necessitate the submission of a new Bill.

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relatively simple Plural Voting Bill, in replacement of the more elaborate Franchise Bill, for its first. Another democratic commitment to the "people" was made when Ministers early pledged themselves to the creation of a new Second Chamber, wherein no part of the hereditary principle would be allowed to survive but which would, none the less, not have the old power of veto restored.¹ Possibly the most technically "unconstitutional" step planned by Ministers was revealed when, in June, it became plain that they intended to spare their followers the heavy strain of long Committee stages on Home Rule and Welsh Disestablishment. Of course, it could be argued that every relevant point in both measures had been discussed, almost *ad nauseam*, during the previous autumn and winter, and that the measures, as a whole, had been before the British public for more than a quarter of a century. Nevertheless the Closing of the Committee stages added fuel to the fires of Opposition wrath and, on July 5th, the first public parade of the Ulster Volunteer Force took place. On July 12th, Sir Edward Carson, in a speech at Belfast, conveyed Mr. Bonar Law's assurance to Ulster Unionists that the Opposition was behind them whatever steps, constitutional or unconstitutional, they might feel compelled to take. Then, on July 15th, the House of Lords rejected the Home Rule Bill, on July 21st the Welsh Disestablishment Bill suffered the same fate, and on July 24th the Plural Voting Bill, too, was defeated. The end of the Session, on August 15th, brought still more dangerous developments in its train for, during September, a military man was appointed "General" of the Ulster Volunteers, a tour of inspection was undertaken by Sir Edward Carson and Mr. F. E. Smith, and arrangements were announced for a Provisional Government to take charge of Ulster directly Home Rule should be written upon the Statute Book. It was already known that arms-smuggling on a considerable scale was being attempted, cases of rifles and bayonets having been seized at Belfast and Dublin on June 3rd.

The situation was now serious enough for Ministers to recognise that a mere mechanical use of their composite majority, during 1914, would no longer do.² Some private exchanges of view took

¹ Cf. *Hansard*, March 10th to 13th, for the proceedings on the Address. The most definite commitment from the Treasury Bench was not the Prime Minister's but Mr. Herbert Samuel's.

² Cf. *The Times* for Asquith's speech at Ladybank on October 25th and Sir Edward Grey's at Berwick on October 27th.

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place with Opposition leaders, but these refused to abandon their claim that the Home Rule Bill should be put to "the nation" before negotiations began on the special problem of Ulster. They knew, of course, that Ministers were committed to the Irish Nationalist party who had had all manner of pledges that the Home Rule Bill would be placed on the Statute Book during the existing Parliament. But that would, doubtless, have made Opposition pleasure all the sweeter in forcing upon Ministers a retraction of their pledges and a break-up of their composite majority. That there was considerable fear among Irish Nationalists, that they might yet be "sold" as part of a British political bargain, stands out clearest from the activities of those Irishmen who, in November, began constructing their own armed force, the Irish Volunteer Corps. And the Corps went on increasing as Nationalist Irishmen asked why Carson and Smith were not prosecuted for raising an Ulster Force, returned on March 1, 1914, as 111,000 strong and armed by gun-running activities whose ambitious scope was already widely known.¹ But the arrest of leading members of Opposition might well have precipitated the very crisis and General Election which both Ministers and Irish members were anxious to avoid. For one thing, Ministers' majority, to judge from by-elections, might well disappear altogether, and even if it did not, the huge labours of the 1912 and 1913 Sessions on "Parliament Act Bills" would have been wasted unless the new majority agreed, during its first Session, to accept the Bills of its predecessors unaltered.

The last Parliamentary Session to open before the "Great War" shifted all political landmarks began on February 10, 1914. The three "Radical Parliament Act Bills" for Home Rule, Welsh Disestablishment and "One Man, One Vote" were reintroduced on March 5th, and, on March 9th, the Prime Minister made an important offer to Ulster. As soon as Home Rule was on the Statute Book, and before it was due to come into operation, Ulster was promised a Bill whereby the Ulster counties might claim a ballot and the power to vote themselves, by bare majority, and for six years, out of the jurisdiction of a Dublin Parliament.² Carson, supported by the entire Opposition, refused to consider the offer

¹ Cf. M. J. MacManus, *Eamon de Valera*, pp. 18-21.

² *Hansard*, March 9th, for Asquith on the motion for the Second Reading of the Home Rule Bill.

as it stood. "We don't want", he asserted, "a sentence of death with a stay of execution for six years", and the political strife became more desperate as the Home Rule Bill approached nearer the Statute Book under the Parliament Act. Towards the end of March there was a new "crisis" produced by the resignation of a number of Army officers in Ireland who feared they were about to be used against the Ulster Volunteers. The War Secretary secured the withdrawal of the resignations by reassurances that caused his own fall and the Prime Minister's appearance at the War Office to keep the situation from passing completely out of control. It is plain why Ministers felt it necessary to make another tentative step in concession and to hint that their own influence during the six years' "stay of execution" would be used in favour of giving Ulster "Home Rule within Home Rule". This was still, of course, very much short of Ulster's minimum "demands", and it was, during April, that gun-running for the Ulster Volunteers took on its most lawless and aggressive forms.

Matters were, naturally, made no easier after the Prime Minister had, on May 12th, introduced the motion whereby the Committee stage of the three "Parliament Act Bills" was again virtually to be dispensed with. It was on May 21st that one of the ugliest scenes ever known in Parliament was enacted after the Prime Minister had refused to give complete information on his Ulster Bill though he pressed on the Third Reading stage of Home Rule. The Speaker had to adjourn the House, and, on May 25th, when Home Rule business was resumed, the Prime Minister, at the Speaker's invitation, consented to add to the information already supplied. This helped the Third Reading through the Commons but there were more difficulties with the Lords who declined to make arrangements for Home Rule's Second Reading, in their House, until they had the text of Ministers' Amending Bill for Ulster before them. When this was available, on June 23rd, the Peers turned to deal with it, by amendments, and, on July 14th, a much transformed Ulster measure, but not the Home Rule Bill, was ready to return to the Lower House.

A last effort to procure an agreed settlement was made by the King but, on July 24th, the Prime Minister had to report to Parliament the complete failure of the Buckingham Palace Conference of the party leaders. There was worse news still from Ireland, where gun-running for the Nationalist Volunteers brought bloodshed

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on July 26th,¹ and from the Continent where Austria's declaration of war on Serbia, on July 28th, set in motion a train of catastrophic consequences. By August 4th Britain had become involved in a tremendous war, fated to transform many of its ways of life. There were to be great changes in politics, and the leadership of the "people" in the struggle against "privilege" was destined to pass into very different hands. The great "Radical Land Campaign", for example, preparing for the 1915 elections, was never launched after all, nor was the country ever fated to decide between the "Wrongs of Ulster", on the one hand, and "the Landlord Octopus" on the other.² The next elections did not take place until 1918 and, during their course, Lloyd George himself, now in alliance with the Conservatives, struck a mortal blow at the Radicalism which had seemed to dominate the country between 1906 and 1914. The immediate profit of the "coupon election" seemed to go to Conservatives, but "Labour's" absorption of Radical voters and politicians was so rapid that the first "Labour" Government was formed in 1924, and the second, on a much stronger Parliamentary basis in 1929. Meanwhile a very big effort with lavish finances never likely to be available again, had been made to win back the working-class voter from "Labour" to "Radicalism". It had failed, and the dream of recovering power at Westminster for a modernised, post-war Radicalism, was increasingly abandoned.

¹ Cf. M. J. MacManus, *Eamon de Valera*, p. 21.

² The material for the "Land Campaign" had been gathered and given wide publicity in two volumes, entitled *The Land, The Report of the Land Enquiry Committee* (Vol. 1 Rural, Vol. 2 Urban). Both volumes were substantial though issued very cheaply. And it is interesting to find these materials refurbished in an attempt to stage a "Liberal revival" which might have taken Lloyd George and Herbert Samuel back to office in 1929.

APPENDIX

SOME RADICAL DIFFICULTIES ON FOREIGN POLICY, 1905-1914

THROUGHOUT the period of Liberal rule after December 1905, the Continental situation provided never-ending problems for Radicals. At first it was hardly realized that a dangerous price might have to be paid for the *Entente Cordiale* with France. The Colonial compromises effected between Britain and France, to their mutual advantage, hardly pleased Germany which soon discovered that her "open door" in Morocco might be closed by France, a Power, like Britain, already disproportionately blessed with colonies and protectorates. But until Germany publicly demonstrated dangerous dislike for the "Tunisification" of Morocco, British Radicals held that the friendly termination of the bitter Colonial disputes with France should provide an irresistible argument for a steep downward revision of Arms expenditure.

It was the Cobden Club which issued a reasoned plea for Service retrenchments, *The Burden of Armaments*, in 1905. There should be, it was claimed, a searching investigation into the reasons why the Army of 1905, with 288,969 officers and men, was 61,000 stronger than in 1897, and a halt should be called to the continuous increase of Navy expenditure. Since 1889, it was urged, Navy expansion had proceeded on the assumption that two great Continental navies might combine in attempting swift, mortal blows at Britain. Yet the Russo-Japanese War had demonstrated what needless alarms had been excited by the legend of a powerful Russian Fleet, and the French Navy, once maintained at two-thirds of the British strength, had been allowed to sink to less than half that proportion and was, in any case, more concerned with Germany's Fleet than Britain's. And the restless alarmists who were now, in 1905, calling up the same fears about German naval increases as had once, between 1897 and 1901, been raised about Russian Fleet increases, should reflect that Britain's naval expenditure largely exceeded that of France, Russia, and Germany combined. British naval expenditure in 1904 was estimated at £42,431,000, French at £12,517,000, Russian at £11,835,000, and German at £11,659,000. The conclusion of the Cobden Club, in short, was this:

"Events of the greatest importance have occurred in the past five years—which, in our view, make it far less necessary for this country to maintain its armed forces at a point ready for instant war, and absolutely safe to return to the peace establishment at which they stood immediately before the late (Boer) war.

"The first of these is the agreement which has been so happily arrived at with France . . .

"The second is the war between Russia and Japan . . .

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"The third is the establishment of the Permanent International Tribunal at The Hague, and the conclusion of arbitration treaties between this country and most of the great Powers of the world.

"The importance of the first of these—the Anglo-French Agreement can scarcely be exaggerated."

The Liberal Government, formed in December 1905, took control amid the anxieties caused by German objections to the "Tunisification" of Morocco which the French had begun under the shelter of the Anglo-French Agreement. No impartial student can deny that Germany had a case even if the Kaiser's appearance at Tangier to offer support to the Sultan of Morocco was a dangerous gesture. The Tangier gesture did, however, bring French politicians to their senses, and at the Algeciras Conference, early in 1906, Germany received some superficial satisfaction. Meantime the Liberal Government, though it accepted the *Entente Cordiale* as part of its diplomatic inheritance, tried to prevent any deterioration of relations with Germany. The great Radical majority behind it was even more averse to allowing the *Entente* with France or scaremongering about the German Navy to poison Anglo-German relations. During the 1906 Session, that majority insisted on adopting a "notorious" resolution. It declared, despite the Morocco crisis, "that the growth of expenditure on armaments is excessive and ought to be reduced. Such expenditure lessens national and commercial credit, intensifies the unemployed problem, reduces the resources available for, and presses with exceptional severity on, the industrial classes."

After such a resolution, an effort had to be made by the War Office and the Admiralty to offer reduced Estimates for 1907, the more so as Ministers intended to propose Universal Armament Reduction at The Hague Peace Conference of 1907. The Army Estimates were at £27,760,000, over two millions lower than those of the previous year while the Admiralty claimed to have reduced expenditure by £1,427,000 and the Fleet's manpower from 129,000 to 128,000. These figures greatly disappointed the strong Radical and Labour contingents crusading for Disarmament and were certainly insufficient to move The Hague Peace Conference.

An important diplomatic event of 1907 was the negotiation of the Anglo-Russian Agreements on Afghanistan, Tibet and Persia. Russia consented to make British India completely secure by accepting exclusion from Afghanistan, Tibet and Southern Persia but her price, humbled though she was by the defeats of the Russo-Japanese War, was considerable. The best part of Persia was to become a Russian "sphere of influence". There was much more Radical criticism of this Anglo-Russian arrangement than there had been of the Anglo-French Agreement. The principal form this criticism took may be illustrated from the *Daily News* of September 25, 1907. This journal, though unwilling to censure the Liberal Foreign Office with the relentlessness of the *Labour Leader* or *Justice*, was resentful.

"The long expected text of the Russian Agreement," it declared, "is at length before us, but the anxious supporters of the Government will seek

in vain in its incoherent preamble for any explanation that will reconcile it with the principles of a Liberal foreign policy . . . The Treaty makes over the greater part of Persia to Russian 'influence'. If the Persians forget their aspirations, accept the Russian Minister as a sort of Viceroy, and allow their railways, banks, roads, telegraphs, transport, and insurance to pass quietly under foreign control, it will be a 'peaceful penetration'. If they resist the Cossack who desolated the Caucasus will descend upon them also. Those of us who expect that a Liberal foreign policy should respect the idea of nationality have warrant enough in this concession for indignation."

Part of the objections to the Anglo-Russian Agreement arose from the hatred of the English "masses" for the "tyrannous" record of the Tsars. This continued to make problems for years as when, in 1908, a motion for the reduction of the Liberal Foreign Secretary's salary was moved from the Labour benches and seconded from the Irish in order to emphasize the undesirability of the latest development of Anglo-Russian co-operation—the proposed State visit of King Edward to the Tsar. A considerable number of Radicals, too, were uneasy but allowed themselves to be influenced by the argument that, in the long run, Anglo-Russian association could only help Russia's "advanced" elements towards freedom. The Labour benches, however, remained obstinately convinced that it was the Tsardom that would gain most from the parade of Anglo-Russian friendship that had begun. In 1909 they renewed their attack on what the Foreign Office was busy with, professing special indignation at its plan of bringing the Tsar on a State visit to Britain. How difficult, indeed, it was proving to arouse the slightest enthusiasm in Britain for the Anglo-Russian Agreement had just been amply demonstrated during the "Bosnia crisis" of the autumn of 1908. Austria had turned her thirty-year-old occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina into annexation and had simultaneously encouraged Bulgaria to declare full independence of the Turks. Yet the protests of Russia won far less "popular" sympathy in Britain than did those of the "Young Turks" who had just undertaken a "democratic" revolution and established "Parliamentary government". The Foreign Office gave, of course, a more sympathetic hearing to the Russian protests than did the "millions". Even so, it did not venture much in support of the Russian case though, early in 1906, during the "Morocco crisis", France had been supported to the dangerous point of secret military conversations.

Meanwhile, the main peril of the Anglo-French and the Anglo-Russian Agreements was becoming plain, the growing apprehension among Germans that their country was being "encircled" by a ring of three mighty Empires, the British, the French and the Russian. There were Radical Ministers like Lloyd George who, right down to 1914, professed sympathetic understanding of German apprehensions and justified, even in public, Germans' anxiety for a powerful Army, capable of safeguarding their Eastern and Western frontiers simultaneously. Here is Lloyd George in the *Daily Chronicle's* New Year's Day number of 1914:

"The German Army is vital, not merely to the existence of the German

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Empire, but to the very life and independence of the nation itself, surrounded as Germany is by other nations, each of which possesses armies about as powerful as her own. We forget that, while we insist upon a 60 per cent superiority (so far as our naval strength is concerned) over Germany being essential to guarantee the integrity of our own shores—Germany has nothing like that superiority over France alone, and she has, of course, in addition to reckon with Russia on her Eastern frontier. Germany has nothing which approximates to the two-Power standard. She has therefore become alarmed by recent events, and is expending huge sums of money on the expansion of her military resources.”

Lloyd George, of course, could never similarly discuss the German case for a Navy, strong enough to make it wise for Britain, France and Russia to consider the peaceful admission of Germany closer to colonial parity with themselves. What prevented naval discussion of any objectivity was the violent outbreak of alarmism, on the subject of German Naval increases, which developed in 1908 and never really subsided until war came. Some of the less desirable origins of this alarmism have since become known—Lord Fisher’s monomania at the Admiralty, Lord Northcliffe’s dangerous influence on the *Daily Mail* and *The Times*, and Tory hopes of revenging 1906. Then, the Kaiser’s unfortunate temperament and the gaudy militarism with which he surrounded himself ended by driving some of the most picturesque of British “advanced” politicians into the anti-German camp. Blatchford and Hyndman were making their first “scare” pronouncements in 1908, while Frederic Harrison began his in 1909. Yet, sure of warm approval from many Radical, Labour and Irish Parliamentarians, Lloyd George could still, in favourable circumstances, make some devastating counter-attacks on the “scaremongers”. Speaking on January 1, 1910, during the “People’s Budget” General Election, Lloyd George said this:

“... last year they were clamouring for a bigger and more expensive fleet. There was a great national crisis, we were told; the security of our shores was threatened; the Germans might come over any day ...

“That was the agitation that was got up, and they said: ‘You must build, and you must build four, eight, eighteen’. They were not particular about the number; they were as little particular about the number as they were about who should pay. And we said, ‘There is no cause for this alarm. We have actually got in men and material something like three to one in the German fleet’. ‘What,’ they said, ‘have you only got three to one against the German Fleet? Traitors! Little Englanders!’

“Anyhow, they would have the ships. They had no doubt that three to one was not enough. We said, ‘We will have four mammoth Dreadnoughts!’ They said, ‘We want eight, and won’t wait’. ‘Very well,’ we said, ‘we will give you eight.’ Then we sent in the bill. We saw that these people were suffering from an attack of nerves. So we gave them something to cure them ... It is wonderful what a steadying effect it has had on their nerves.

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Though, on July 21, 1911, Lloyd George himself undertook to issue a plain warning to Germany during the Agadir crisis, the anti-armaments party among Radical journalists and politicians survived. In 1912 a direct attack on the conduct of the "Liberal" Foreign Office, as responsible for much of the Anglo-German tension, was issued in G. H. Perris's *Our Foreign Policy and Sir Edward Grey's Failure*, and Germany was certainly not the villain of E. D. Morel's *Morocco in Diplomacy*. Then, in 1913, the Radical anti-armament spokesmen, Sir William Byles and Joseph King, were hot on the trail of suspected agreements between the English and French Governments whereby the French obtained, during the crises of 1905, 1908 and 1911, the assurance of support by a British Expeditionary Force though the British public was left in complete ignorance of so tremendous a commitment. The same spokesmen were, in 1914, trying to establish the truth of further reports that complete military co-operation between Britain, France and Russia was being pressed and that an Anglo-Russian Naval Agreement had been signed. Mr. Asquith in 1913 and Sir Edward Grey in 1914 countered by asserting that "there were no unpublished agreements which would restrict or hamper the freedom of the Government or of Parliament to decide whether or not Great Britain should participate in a war". The foregoing words were actually used in Grey's answer of June 11, 1914, to questions on the alleged Anglo-Russian Naval Agreement from Byles and King. Not two months afterwards, when declarations of war began on the Continent, it became clear that they had been dangerously misleading. Certainly, part of the Cabinet including both Asquith and Grey held Britain committed "in honour" to France while another part intended to resign rather than share the responsibility for making war on Germany in the circumstances. Of course, Germany's decision to force a passage through Belgium prevented the major Cabinet split that seemed inevitable at one stage. Yet the old Radical dislike of wars of dubious diplomatic origin still displayed itself in the resignation of two such notable Cabinet Ministers as Morley and Burns, and in the strong "pacifist" inclinations of the old anti-armaments group at Westminster.

No one shared the old Radical attitude towards "imperialist" wars more completely than Keir Hardie, the soul of the Labour Party of 1914. It was under his influence and Ramsay MacDonald's that the Parliamentary Labour Party adopted a Declaration very critical of the war. It asserted:

"That the conflict between the nations of Europe in which this country is involved, is owing to foreign ministers pursuing diplomatic policies for the purpose of maintaining a balance of power; that our own policy of understanding with France and Russia only was bound to increase the power of Russia, both in Europe and Asia, and to endanger good relations with Germany . . .

"That the Labour movement reiterates the fact that it has opposed the policy which has produced the war . . ."

But the bulk of the Parliamentary Labour Party was soon to leave this type of protest to its I.L.P. wing and the "Pacifist" Radicals. The war was

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being made more popular by propaganda on the "horrible German atrocities in Belgium". It seemed to be wisest to adopt the opportunistic course of taking the war for granted and attempting to turn it to the profit of the working class and to the destruction of "Prussian Militarism". That, too, was the direction taken by the opportunism of the Webbs, of H. G. Wells and of Bernard Shaw, the veritable leaders of "progressive thought". Shaw's *Common Sense about the War*, for example, issued in November 1914, while ascribing even more war-responsibility to the British ruling classes than to the German, contrived nevertheless to reach such conclusions as that "We are supporting the War as a war on war" and "We must have the best army in Europe". History will, perhaps, prefer the honester emotions of the beaten "pacifist" wing of the "party of progress".

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<i>Session</i>	<i>Volume</i>	<i>Paper</i>
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